1. Church government
2 Courts, Ecclesiastical

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MODERN

PROTESTANT CHURCH COURTS

UNMASKED.

Jordan, James

MODERN

PROTESTANT CHURCH COURTS

UNMASKED,

by Rev. George Bourne

"Beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the *councils;* and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten. They shall put you out of the synagogues; and whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."

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LETTER

TO

NATHANAEL CHRISTIAN.

If you adjudge that the following reminiscences of modern Church Courts will "please your neighbors for good to edification," you may transfer them to a printer. All Rabbis and Church Courts, who apply to themselves my reproofs and admonitions, will distinctly understand, that they were intended for *them alone*—"Qui capit, ille fecit." So I commence with the prayer that closed the sermons of our predecessors—"May the Lord add his blessing! Amen."

The expunging of factitious titles in these delineations of Church Courts, proceeds from a conviction that the multiplication of collegiate honorary appellatives has peculiarly tended to augment the assumptions of antichristian lordliness by priestly rulers, and to coerce the cringing of those Issachars, who, because they think that rest is good, and the land of *false* peace pleasant, "couch down between two burdens, and become servants to tribute."

A Boanerges of the last century accurately illustrated that topic. "The term *Doctor* is now a title of honor, and does not signify any office or duty. It has the same meaning as *Rabbi* among the Jews, and so must be understood. 'Be ye not called Rabbi!' Therefore, Doctors are very presumptuous to pretend to be Christ's disciples, while they openly break his commandment. The title *Doctor* has no more relation to true religion than the title *Devil.* Both of them were first obtained through pride and inordinate ambition. Hence, the title *Doctor in Divinity* is antichristian; and the title *Devil* is as much Christian as the title *Doctor*, when applied to preachers of the gospel. Satan was the first creature who affected to be called *Rabbi;* and he rebelled against Jehovah, because he could not obtain that longed for *diploma!*—He seduced the two inhabitants of Eden into his rebellion; and promised that they should be as "gods, knowing good and evil," if they would "eat of the tree of knowledge." Arrogant as it was in Satan and our first parents to affect such high titles, yet they took a better method to obtain preferment than many who have been influenced by that spirit and temper. Satan directed Adam and Eve to take first of "the tree of knowledge," before they could obtain the title of *Rabbi.* Satan did not choose, like modern universities, to prostitute *his* degrees, by conferring *diplomas* upon asses."

Many of the "Beast's abominations," and of the "False Prophet's strong delusions" still are embodied with the reformed churches. The "refiner's fire, and the fuller's soap" are now as requisite as they were in the days of Immanuel, when he drove from the temple of God the Rabbis and their parasites, who had transformed "the house of prayer into a den of thieves."

Through the "bright and blissful Reformation," many vociferously boast of their emancipation from the manacles of kingcraft, and the fetters of priestcraft. Notwithstanding, among the Protestant churches there exists and very powerfully sways, that enemy to all truth and sanctity which the Apostle John emphatically entitles—"That Spirit of Antichrist." Two most mischievous characteristics are unfolded by it—a deceitful, time-serving conformity to the world, as a substitute for the "love of the Father;" and a daring usurpation of the divine prerogatives by its exaltation in the temple of God.

Open encroachments of ecclesiastical despotism are so directly opposed to all the notions of freedom in our country, that protestant priestcraft, if exhibited without disguise, would instantly be repelled and denounced by all citizens. Yet, in its concealed operations and masked exterior, that "working of Satan" which is an emanation of the great "falling away" and departure from the faith that the Apostle Paul predicted, is now producing its "lying won-

ders," in a pestiferous indifference to evangelical institutions, and in a perversion of the gospel, which is evidently so little valued, by the practical disregard of its hallowed appointments.

The carnal security and the irreligious stupefaction which so widely reign and are lamented, are among the portentous "signs of the times;" because due inquiry is not made either as to the causes or the effects of those spiritual evils. There must be an iniquitous system stealthily operating, which can produce pernicious results so extensive and diversified; or so many Christian denominations would not be ingulphed in that paralyzing influence.

The watchman who has been upon the walls of Jerusalem, during the last twenty-five years, unless he has been "sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber," must have seen an ugly spirit and a suspicious power, with consummate craftiness, gradually strengthening; the effects of which are destructive of "pure religion," and derogatory to the government of "Him who is head over all things to the church."

It is not the union of a lordly priesthood with infidel and ungodly statesmen—nor is it the direct infringement of Christian liberty, and a usurpation of the mastery of conscience, through oppressive and persecuting legislative enactments—but it is the covert assumption of antichristian authority, and the developement of Babylonian motives and claims, by ecclesiastical assemblies. Under different names and

forms, they are the counterpart of the ancient Papal councils. On many occasions they have unfolded a callous hardihood in perpetrating acts of iniquity, which is marked with that "all deceivableness of unrighteousness," that the Apostle Paul described as inseparable from the grand impious Western apostacy.

That mysterious despotism is progressively undermining truth and godliness; for which it substitutes servility of conscience, with a temporizing solicitude to commingle "all that is in the world" with the church. Thus it is endeavoring to shew off "the household of faith" bedizened in the garb of the "Mother of Harlots:" and to array the humble sheepfold of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, in "purple and scarlet colors, decked with gold and precious stones and pearls;" instead of that adorning in "simplicity and godly sincerity," which appertains to "the kingdom of God not of this world, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

It will be distinctly understood that my animadversions in the ensuing essay advert not to any "visible church of Christ, or congregation of faithful men in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance"—nor to any individual preacher of any name, as fulfilling his duties in his pastoral and ministerial relations to the Christian society with which he is officially connected—nor to any fraternal

consociations of Christians of any class who are combined in effort to promote and extend sound evangelical knowledge, practical piety, Christian philanthropy and "pure religion," as their sole objects—nor even to any of the uninitiated, upright members of ecclesiastical judicatures, whose minds, by some means, are corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, 2 *Cor.* xi. 3; but the delineations apply only to the crafty inventors, managers, and supporters of "Church Courts," as they characterize themselves; who, after the true pontifical example, arrogate in other words to be "Christ's Vicar on earth," and who claim "respect and obedience from all the faithful to their decisions," however impious and antichristian. To them alone the following censures apply. Their unholy machination I spurn, and their popish "Councils" I denounce.

The single design of this disquisition, therefore, is to expose those spurious issues of the Papal Hierarchy, modern Protestant "Church Courts," in their genuine deformity, to the scrutiny of all believers "who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," and who "crown him Lord of all." May they be enabled, by divine grace, accurately to "try the spirits whether they are of God!"

NOTICE.

One of the deep artifices of priestcraft in every age has been this—to anathematize all persons who venture to oppose those human traditions which ecclesiastical tyrants have substituted for apostolic truth; until it has become almost an oracle among many professors of the gospel, that to dispute an unrighteous decision of a company of Rabbis is equally profane as to blaspheme God. Nevertheless, the members of "Church Courts," or as they impiously term their brawling assemblies, "Courts of Jesus Christ!" exemplify no indisposedness to abrogate their own "acts," and to revile each other; when by their Jesuitical legerdemain, they are found alternately contending at one "Ecclesiastical Judicature," in a turbulent minority; and at the next meeting, by a heartless majority, fulminating their ruthless excommunication.

The invectives which the litigants reciprocally

effuse, amid their wicked contentions, and the outrageous indecorum of those sectarian warriors at their convocations "for strife and debate," now seem to be an inseparable part of their transactions. Let an impartial observer only express a doubt whether the scene which he witnesses is not rather a transcript of Corinthian divisions, than of the "one heart and one soul," which the primitive "multitude of them who believed" manifested, and all the fierce combatants, like the ancient Sadducees and Pharisees, lift up their voices with a great shout and cry—"Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live!"

What Murray said respecting "*Doctor*," with a trifling alteration may be affirmed of "*Church Court*." That title "has no more relation to true religion," than the term *Popish Inquisition*.

It is now the constant and universal practice to brand all persons as "*heretics*, *factious*, and enemies to religion," who will not obsequiously "fall down and worship" that new fangled "molten calf," *churchcraft*. "At what time is heard the sound of the cornet and sackbut," wo be to the rebel who refuses to obey the arrogant mandate of that ferocious Babylonian!—If he escape the "burning fiery furnace," or the "den of lions," he will be delivered only by "the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and the God of Daniel."

In numberless instances, the proceedings of modern ecclesiastical assemblies have been opposed not only to that which is Christian and just, but also to "whatever is lovely and of good report." All the infidel ribaldry which has been disseminated during the last seven years, has not so deeply wounded the religion of Christ, and retarded the coming of the kingdom of God, as the theologico-Jesuitico-tragicomedies of some Church Courts in Cincinnati and Philadelphia. Those assemblies have denied their own cardinal doctrines. Their own discipline they have abolished. The most solemn contracts they have attempted to nullify. Then they almost "bade to be stoned with stones" the few Joshuas and Calebs that remained among those "rebellious and evil congregations who took counsel together against the Lord."

My friend has inferred, whether logically or not the Rabbis may decide, that churchcraft is inseparable from all legislative and judicial convocations of ecclesiastics, under whatever name they may be organized—and that their corruption always has been, and necessarily is, proportioned to the number of the craftsmen. As I fully assent to his positions, I therefore concluded, that the publication of his "*Church Courts Unmasked*" might promote the cause of gospel truth, and would justify and sustain its Christian advocates. O! that in all the lovely and attractive

characteristics of the gracious Redeemer's disciples, every one of them may constantly exemplify that they are "the salt of the earth, and the light of the world!"

NATHANAEL CHRISTIAN.

CHURCH COURTS UNMASKED.

INTRODUCTORY.

Almost immediately after Martin Luther published his original propositions against "Papal Indulgences," Frederick, the Elector of Saxony, demanded the opinion of Erasmus concerning that reformer's opposition to Tetzel. The wily worldling replied—"In Luther are two great faults. He plagues the bellies of the Monks, and he troubles the pope's crown, in which matters no man should interfere." Three hundred years have since elapsed; and notwithstanding all our boasted advancement, the witty truth of that temporizing assailant of the anti-christian supremacy, is not less oracular and applicable than when it was first announced.

In one short paragraph, John Newton has condensed the substance of all the historical annals relating to the Christian church: "A declension from the simplicity and purity of worship, principles, and morals, was visible very early in the church. The progress of it was rapid, especially from the time of Constantine. Then persecution ceased, and a tide of wealth and worldly honors flowed in upon those who, by their profession, were bound to be patterns of humility and self-denial to others. From that period till the Reformation, ecclesiastical history

affords us little more than a detail of pride, intrigue, oppression, and cruelty, under the pretext of religion, which had not been known among the heathen. The nations which were relieved from the chains and darkness of popery at the Reformation, did not long preserve much more than the name and a form to distinguish them. In most countries, *the state became the idol of the church, and the church the creature of the state.*"

Such was the character of the churchcraft. Thomas Scott thus portrays the craftsmen. "The most enormous wickedness has commonly been committed under the forms of law and justice, and varnished over by a semblance of piety. Ringleaders in the most aggravated oppression have often perplexed themselves in devising how to regulate their conduct by statute and custom, and with the appearance of impartiality." *Mark*, xiv. "In every age ungodly priests have been ringleaders in the diabolical work of persecution; and would put the Lord's servants to death, if they had it in their power, and could not otherwise silence them." *Jer.* xi. "Assemblies of ecclesiastical rulers have always been more corrupt, unrighteous, and cruel, than any other body of men. They boasted of their unanimity, whereas it was a wicked conspiracy against the cause of God, and the interests of his religion. The Christian cannot reasonably expect so much tenderness and compassion, when suffering for the truth, as a thief and murderer when punished for his crimes." *Matt.* xxvi.

To which may appropriately be subjoined his well-timed admonition—"Beware of a splendid, a lucrative, or

a fashionable religion. Avoid the mystery of iniquity, and study diligently the great mystery of godliness, that we may learn humility, simplicity, self-denial, and gratitude in the stable at Bethlehem, in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, by the side of the well at Sychar, in the garden of Gethsemane, and the mount Golgotha. The more we resemble Christ, the less shall we be liable to be deceived by antichrist." *Rev.* xvii.

In this republic, the state is *not* the idol of the church, nor is the church the creature of the state; but that antichristian combination now is superceded by another pernicious mixture equally unscriptural. Using the term "world" as it is understood in the Holy Bible, in many painful aspects, *the world is the idol of the church, and the church is the creature of the world!* That unholy coalition is not developed in similar exterior lordliness and magnificence, with which it was gorgeously decorated by Constantine and his successors; nor in pagan, impious gewgaws and idolatry under a Christian name, as in "the seat of the Beast, and the ten kingdoms" of modern Babylon. The present approximating devotedness of the church to the world is more deleterious and fraught with alarm; because it is artfully concealed, and the process of amalgamation is so gradual and mysterious, that without the *Amen's eye-salve*, it cannot be discerned.

It is essential, therefore, to unmask "that spirit of antichrist" which lurks in those protestant ecclesiastical assemblies, where the spurious progeny of "the Beast and the Mother of Harlots" propagate their "form of godliness."

This discussion adverts not to popery, except as that

"working of Satan" is virtually transferred into the reformed churches, and copied by Protestant Church Courts; because they all avowedly discard *every thing* which distinctively appertains to the Roman priesthood. Many disciples, doubtless through ignorance, sincerely believe, that "ecclesiastical courts," clerical titles, pulpits "arrayed in purple and scarlet color," pontifical "stalls and thrones," heathenish paintings and figures, drapery invented by the priests of Baal, and "goodly Babylonish garments" from accursed Jericho; all combined with splendid edifices of marble and mahogany, and cushions, and carpets, and curtains, are complete transcripts of apostolic times. That in such buildings the first heralds of the cross preached Christ crucified. That in similar dresses, "Rabbi" Stephen, and "Saint" Peter, and "Doctor" Paul, and the "Right Reverend Bishop" John proclaimed the gospel to the disobedient, and gainsaying, and stiff-necked multitudes. That the "upper room in which the hundred and twenty met, waiting for the promise of the Father;" and Mary's house "where many were gathered together, praying" for the deliverance of Peter "out of the hands of Herod, and all the expectation of the Jews;" and the "upper chamber" in which Paul "continued his speech to the disciples until midnight," were exact counterparts of the gaudy temples built through vain glory "that they may be seen of men." And that modern "Church Courts, and Ecclesiastical Judicatures," are congregated bodies precisely assimilated to that assemblage of the apostles and elders who met under the direction of the Holy Ghost to announce "what the Spirit saith unto the

churches." Those mischievous errors must be corrected. Believers should learn to discriminate between the authorized institutions of the gospel, and the "doctrines of men, with the tradition of the elders;" and not to "lay aside the commandment of God" for that *churchcraft* which flows from "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

I.—A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

THE nineteenth of the Episcopalian "Articles of Religion" presents an accurate and comprehensive definition of the term *Church*.—"The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance." To which I subjoin the perspicuous exposition of John Newton, because his bias was in favor of the hierarchical interpretation.

"The several senses in which the word church may be understood agreeable to the Scripture:—1. It denotes in the aggregate, *the mystical church;* the whole body of that spiritual kingdom, of which the Redeemer is the living and life-giving head. *Col.* i. 18; *Acts* xx. 28. 2. The *visible church;* all those who bear and acknowledge the name of Christians, and who admit and enjoy the gospel revelation. 3. The *catholic church;* all who agree in the fundamental truths of the gospel, and whose conversation is regulated by its precepts. *Eph.* vi. 24. 4. The word *church* is applied to particular societies of Christians, who are connected by a participation in the same ordinances of the gospel, and who maintain a scriptural separation from the sinful spirit and customs of the world."—*Messiah: Sermon* 36.

The preceding description is confirmed by George Campbell. Both those expositors in fact affirm, that the

word *church* means two things only—either the whole body of believers; or each separate congregation, who assemble in one place, and with one accord, for the enjoyment of "fellowship one with another, and with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ."

The delusions invented by churchcraft, and which the Rabbis propagate are these. That the title *church* means an assembly of delegates selected from each society; to whom is committed the control and government of the whole body who are thus represented—and that the authority thus assumed by ambition, and permitted through blindness or intimidation, is according to the appointment of Christ, and sanctioned by apostolic example.

Man is amenable to the Judge of conscience only for the improvement or neglect of his privileges. He cannot transfer to another his own inalienable rights, or the performance of his own imperative duties. He is subject to "the Lord of the servants;" and must "give an account of himself to God," and of his use of the talents committed to his charge, when he shall "stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

Divine revelation teaches nothing of delegated Christian immunities, obligations or responsibility. Every steward of the Lord must act for himself, equally as if he were the only inhabitant of the world. The final destiny of the faithful and of the slothful servant will not be determined by the principle of substitution.

The sacred canon gives no sanction to those representative confederacies which insult the King in Zion by their pompous titles, "Ecclesiastical Judicatures, and Church

Courts." Not a vestige of that antichristian ladder, by which "that man of sin, the son of perdition, exalted himself above all that is called God," can be traced through the primitive records of ecclesiastical history, during several generations after the gracious Redeemer poured out the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, enumerated those "gifts unto men" which the Lord gave to his church after "he ascended on high." Those donations he declared are sufficient to render the disciples "perfect men." But he specifies not "*Church Courts!*" The "holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" never heard of an "Ecclesiastical Judicature," except the Jewish Sanhedrim or Council, of whom the Lord commanded them to beware! They never possessed any notion of such an arrogant interference with the exclusive supremacy of the "King of kings and Lord of lords;" unless the Apostle Paul beheld them in the temple of God encircling "that Wicked;" or the Apostle John saw them on the Beast's crowns and horns, when he was at Patmos, "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Until two hundred years and more after the last of Immanuel's chosen witnesses had given his infallible testimony, the followers of the Lamb knew no more of a "Church Court," than they did of the Spanish Inquisition.

In the New Testament, each company of Christians is addressed as a *distinct* church. There is no intimation of a federative compact among the different societies governed by a delegated legislative judiciary. We read

concerning "the churches in Judea; the churches of Syria; all the churches of the Gentiles; the churches of Christ; the churches of God; the churches of Galatia; the churches of Asia; and the churches of Macedonia;" but not the ——— church in Judea, etc. Either, therefore, the Apostles were mistaken, or our nomenclature is not evangelical; for we write the ——— church in the United States, meaning fifty, seventy, or five hundred isolated congregations. The title *church* thus applied to designate large consociations composed of many small separate communities, is a *heretical* misnomer; and equally erroneous and deceptive, as those creatures of the civil government, commonly called—"the *church* of Rome; the church of England; of Ireland; of Holland; and of Scotland."

ORIGIN OF COUNCILS.

The ensuing paragraph from Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History directly corroborates the preceding definition of a Christian church.

"During a great part of the second century" and of course the former period, which is denominated the apostolic age, "the churches were independent of each other; nor were they joined together by association, confederacy, or any other bonds than those of charity. Each assembly was a little state, governed by its own laws, which were enacted or approved by the society. In process of time, all the Christian churches in a province were formed into one large ecclesiastical body; which like confederated states assembled at certain times, in order to de-

liberate about the common interests of the whole. That institution had its origin among the Greeks; but in a short time it became universal; and similar assemblies were formed in all places where the gospel had been planted. They consisted of the deputies from several churches, and were called by the Greeks, *Synods;* and by the Latins, *Councils;* and the laws which were enacted in those general meetings were denominated *Canons*, that is, *Rules*. Those councils soon changed the face of the whole church, and gave it a new form; for *by them the ancient privileges of the people were considerably diminished, and the power and authority of the bishops were greatly augmented.* The humility and prudence of those pious men, combined with the terrific persecutions which always encompassed them, hindered them from assuming the jurisdiction with which they were afterwards invested. At their first appearance in those general councils, they acknowledged that they were no more than the delegates of their respective churches; and that they acted in the name, and by the appointment of their people. But they soon changed that lowly Christian tone. Imperceptibly they extended the limits of their authority; turned their influence into dominion, and their counsels into laws; and finally announced, that Christ had empowered them to prescribe to his servants *authoritative rules of faith and manners.*"

II.—ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF CHURCH COURTS.

RABBI DIOTREPHES, D. D. D., WHO "LOVETH TO HAVE THE PRE-EMINENCE, PRATING MALICIOUS WORDS."

At an early period after the death of Polycarp, and the other immediate disciples of the Apostle John, primitive Christianity was deteriorated by the ambition of the pastors. About the commencement of the third century, originated those ecclesiastical assemblies, and that official distinction among the preachers, which since have cursed mankind with so much crime and anguish. The churches in the large cities and their vicinity, when requisite, during the season of persecution met in one body, to consult for their mutual safety and welfare. But as it was dangerous, if not impossible, when they became numerous, for such multitudes to be collected together, on account of their enemies, to attain their object, without discovery and death, each church deputed some of their brethren to be present at the deliberations; at which one of the senior ministers, who "always bore about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," was selected to preside. At that period there were no Rabbis present who "loved the chief seat in the synagogue, and the greatest among them was the servant of all." Those deliberative convocations were not debased by the title of "Ecclesias-

tical Judicatures and Church Courts," but were known as "Meetings of the Brethren." The humble and affectionate Christians of that era required no officer to preserve order, and to repress turbulence. A senior minister was appointed chairman merely to expedite business; and to that persecuted minister, already a martyr in anticipation; and to those destitute, afflicted, and tormented followers of Jesus, all of them *installed* on coffins or sepulchres, in one of those recesses or dormitories of the dead Christians near the river Tiber; or "in deserts, or mountains, or dens, and caves of the earth," in the provinces, seated upon rocks; to those "wanderers in sheep skins and goat skins," have succeeded popes, and the whole minor train of antichristian hierarchs and heresiarchs, under many garbs, and names, and ranks, from Pope Gregory VII. in the Vatican, to the lordly modern prelate who extinguishes free discussion, and the furious moderator of a trio of inquisitorial "stealers of men" in this republic.

A voluntary, or an invited, or a delegated consociation of contiguous preachers and members of churches, who assume no spiritual jurisdiction, and who exercise no lordship over the people, often is beneficial. Their meetings, when conducted according to evangelical principles, under the divine blessing, may promote harmony and combine exertion. But permanent "Church Courts," consisting of *ex-officio* ecclesiastical legislators and judges, as they have ever yet developed their principles and operations, to use the expressive language of a renowned Puritan, are "*the tail of the old scorpion with all his*

venom." Many existing "*clerical aristocracies*" are only bastard emanations of the Papacy; although the present condition of society requires, that their most odious excrescences and corruption shall be concealed.

In every age and country, "Ecclesiastical Judicatures, *alias* Church Courts," have disclosed despotism in rule, absurdity and error in decision, and rottenness of principle. All of them in various degrees are copyists of those popish councils, who forged the chains for the inhabitants of Europe, during the bygone ages of midnight gloom. Resolves and laws, orders and acts, creeds and explications, replies and protests, amendments and contradictions, canons and anathemas, in every diversity of unintelligible jargon, all have been framed in those papistical assemblies. Their proceedings appear not to have been regulated according to the requisitions of truth, equity, freedom, and the gospel. The accursed doctrine of *expediency* is the rule of action. To exalt *churchcraft* is the chief end of their deliberations; through the complex servility of the Issachars, who become servants unto the tribute which the Rabbis impose, many memorable doings of "Church Courts" are a labyrinth of contrariety and injustice; proofs of that departure from rectitude, which is the prominent characteristic of their craft.

The grand argument which is advanced for "Church Courts" is derived from the narrative in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, concerning the "coming together of the apostles and elders, and the whole church," to consider the question of conjoining

the observance of some parts of the ceremonial law with the institutions of the Christian dispensation.

The craftsmen who defend "Church Courts," have cunningly endeavored to persuade the unreflecting disciples, that the meeting mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles was like one of their militant arenas. For that purpose, they have called that holy assembly in some obscure apartment in Jerusalem, by the pompously sounding title, *The Apostolic First General Council.* "If it was the first Christian council, it was also the *last* which could truly affirm, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us."

All "Church Courts" claim to be directed and sustained by the Holy Ghost; yet in the application of our Lord's rule, "by their fruits ye shall know them," we are certain, that "the Spirit of grace and truth, of power, of love, and of a sound mind" has not always rested upon them.

To a Christian, the term "council" is repulsive, when implying such a body as that to which the name is affixed by the Head of the Church. Those assemblies are not mentioned in the New Testament, except as inimical to the Redeemer's kingdom, and as persecutors of his faithful servants. "Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils" was the caution which the Saviour gave to his followers. The pungency and the application of the implied truth, even now, are not diminished. *Matt.* x. 16—18.

That meeting at Jerusalem was composed of the divinely inspired and commissioned infallible witnesses of the

Lord's resurrection; of the elder Christians who most probably had beheld his miraculous works, among the five hundred brethren who altogether saw Jesus Christ our Lord, after he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead;" and of the evangelists, who were directed to be present by special monition of the Holy Ghost; for the Apostle Paul informed the Galatians, that he then went up to Jerusalem "by revelation."

When any of the Rabbis who now control "Church Courts and Ecclesiastical Judicatures," and who render them subservient to their own aggrandizement, can exhibit similar credentials, that they are appointed by Christ to decide questions of doctrine and discipline upon the penalty of excommunication, we will admit the validity of their claim. Until then, we shall maintain, if we can decide by their pretensions and doings, from the first Council of Nice, fifteen hundred years ago, down to the last ecclesiastical rabblement who called "evil good, and good evil; and who put light for darkness, and darkness for light," that "Church Courts" deserve very little respect, if they are to be "followed only as they have followed Christ."

One characteristic given of that meeting, when "the apostles, elders, and other brethren came together," demonstrates that "Church Courts" *cannot* "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Even in that hallowed assembly, "there had been *much disputing*," before Peter and James quelled the discord, by openly proclaiming the decision of the Great Head of the Church, as they were

directed by the Holy Ghost. Within twenty years after the Friend of sinners had accomplished his mediatorial work, and when several apostles were present, if those elders and brethren could not assemble and discuss a question which to us comprises no theme for difference of opinion, without long contention, it would indeed be marvellous, if Rabbis who congregate avowedly to strive for the mastery, should not display those humiliating imperfections and that deceitfulness which are inherent in "an evil heart of unbelief."

Therefore, whether we advert to the character of the persons who met at Jerusalem as recorded by the sacred historian; or to the fact, that nothing less than apostolic authority could stop the "disputing among them;" or to the certainty, that the apostles and evangelists were appointed to execute duties in which they could have no successors; it is obvious, that the example of that meeting in Jerusalem is decidedly opposed to all legislative and judicial assemblies under a Christian name, except as churches administer necessary discipline; for it repudiates the whole system of modern churchcraft, as derogatory to Immanuel, and disgraceful and injurious to his kingdom.

Nearly one hundred and fifty years afterwards elapsed, before the first of those minor and lowly conferences of Christian ministers and brethren was held, which constitute the germ whence all the spurious brood of antichristian councils sprung. Powerless indeed must have been those small assemblies, during the temporary intervals of respite between the horrific persecutions of the third century. Restricted must have been their mischievous effects;

because they could not enforce upon any believer their opinions or commands, while "he who letted was not taken out of the way;" and the Roman imperial tyrant constantly brandished his death-dealing sceptre, with the horrors of persecution, over both the ministers and their congregations.

Churchcraft was unknown until the victories of Constantine had rendered him, without a competitor, sovereign of the whole empire. There was no time to contend for dignity and jurisdiction, when the ministerial character insured to the Lord's servant that he should be the first of the society, through the most excrutiating tortures, to pass "from the cross to the crown." Constantine introduced power and wealth into the church, which extended their malign influence, almost without opposition, during twelve hundred years. After three centuries of boasted reformation, that curse has been divested of little of its impious spirit, or of its obstinacy, or of its domineering, or of its love and practice of iniquity.

Constantine attempted to model the church after the state. Official dignities in each were nearly paralleled. He also resolved to coerce an exterior uniformity among all Christians. For that purpose, the Council of Nice was assembled; and the Emperor enjoined, that all churches should accept their creed, and observe their canons for worship and discipline. Prior to that event, concord had existed among the churches generally upon the principal topics of divine revelation. His attempt to compel all the brethren to a minute oneness of sentiment upon "the great mystery of godliness," opened the floodgates of dis-

cord; which were enlarged and perpetuated by the frequent assembling of contradictory councils, and the infatuated determination on the part of the discordant emperors, to enforce obedience to their irreconcilable enactments.

The true character of ancient "Church Courts" and churchcraft can be ascertained from one remarkable fact. Within fifty years after the death of Constantine, to allay some of the wide-spread, furious controversies of that period, and to restore harmony among the noisy, litigious Rabbis, the Emperor Theodosius commanded that a council should meet at Constantinople. Gregory Nazianzen was summoned to attend. That Christian positively refused; and in his reply to Theodosius, stated that he could not conscientiously be present at that proposed council, according to the imperial invitation. "I will not voluntarily take a seat," wrote that sagacious observer, "among chattering cranes and stupid geese. I have never seen or heard of any benefit having flowed from councils; but rather, they are sources of greater division and contention."—The history of the last fourteen hundred and fifty years incontrovertibly ratifies the accuracy of Nazianzen's objections and portraiture.

What where those posterior assemblies, the Councils of Nice, of Constantinople, of Lateran, of Lyons, of Constance, of Basil, and of Trent, with all the other similar conspiracies against our Lord and his Christ? Diabolical machines to perfect "the mystery of iniquity," and to accomplish "the working of Satan."

One of those remarkable analogies which deeply impress

the reflecting mind, occurred at the period of the Reformation. No "Church Courts" assembled in the age of the apostles, and of the "elders who outlived them, and who had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for" his people. During the lives of the earlier protestants also, not one "Ecclesiastical Judicature" ever was collected.

No sight could be more desirable and fascinating than to behold Martin Luther, who burnt the pope's bull and decretals in protestant defiance, exhibiting his evangelical contempt for a confederacy of Rabbis! No sounds could be more exhilirating, than to hear that Christian champion who derided the pope and his cardinals, and who resisted the emperor, with all his myrmidons, and who trampled upon "the devils in Worms, numerous as the tiles on the houses," pronounce his crushing thunder against a "Church Court!"

Who would not exult to see that reformer, who refused to be a Rabbi, and resisted the prelatical pomp and power from detestation of antichristian tyranny; and who presented to that lecherous wife-butcher, Henry VIII., a Bible, with the appropriate denunciation marked—"Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge!" To view and hear "old Latimer" before an "Ecclesiastical Judicature," ridiculing their craft, contemning their usurpations, and smiting Diotrephes, and Demetrius, and Tertullus, and Alexander with his New Testament—that banquet would indeed be a "feast of fat things."

"What shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of the great multitude of martyrs, confessors, and

reformers of all the European nations, 'who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and obtained promises'—and of the puritans, and nonconformists, and 'pilgrims,' who 'quenched the violence' of Star Chamber fire; escaped the edge of the 'ecclesiastical' sword; waxed valiant in fight 'with Church Courts,' and 'turned to flight the armies of the alien' Rabbis. Devoutly and constantly should we pray in the language of Elisha—'Let a double portion of their spirit be upon us!' Amen."

Among protestants, the first regular transcript of that papal "abomination of desolation," was the episcopal convocation who met speedily after Elizabeth's accession to the royal authority in England. What they became, and what they did, are recorded in the Star Chamber, and the High Commission Courts! Their Babylonian doings will be blazoned through the earth as long as the memorial of the "*Rock* at *Plymouth*" shall remain in terrestrial records, and the *twenty-fourth day of August* shall annually revolve. The British government themselves, notwithstanding that "Church Courts" were their own *creature*, were finally obliged to imprison them in the tomb of oblivion, and to write upon that dormant bantling of the "Mother of Harlots"—*Here lies* the parent of national desolation; having the "book of sports" for its pillow to dream upon, and covered with the death-shrieks of two hundred thousand protestants, massacred in Ireland, and with the anguish and curse of seven years civil war in Britain. They still hold fast that restless insatiable adversary, and hinder her from "walking about seeking

whom she may devour!" We may sincerely add—*Requiescat!*

Fifty years after Martin Luther and Zuinglius first resounded the third blast against "Babylon the great," John Knox commenced his system of church ruling representatives. Had that sturdy reformer been endowed with the gift of the "second sight," so that he could have foreseen the results of his own complicated "platform," he would have drowned it "in the depth of the sea with a millstone hanged about its neck," in the same manner as he hurled the image of the popish idol saint into the water, sarcastically remarking—"Let your lady swim, and take care of herself!" Could that immortal advocate of evangelical liberty have kenned the fantastic tricks which some "Church Courts" would subsequently play before high Heaven to make angels weep—and had he anticipated the antichristian oppression and unrighteousness which they would exemplify, he would have banished his compound Judaizing, Babylonian machinery to the inquisitors of Portugal and Spain.

It is superfluous to examine the proceedings of the General Assembly of Scotland, in reference to the Erskines and their associates; because that "Church Court" is part of the British statecraft.

The mischief, however, is very little diminished, when contemplated in the wrathful debates, the stormy recriminations, and the mutual anathemas of the burghers and the anti-burghers; whose "Ecclesiastical Judicatures" were created by themselves, as voluntary assemblies, both under the oppressive yoke. Nevertheless, they

rivalled in churchcraft, "strife, and debate, to make their voice to be heard on high," the most inquisitor-like of their despotic "taskmasters."

To abhorrence, is added contempt, when the haughty and iniquitous proceedings of the English Methodist Conference are surveyed, concerning Kilham, and their other dissentient brethren.

A Christian observer, who is present at the ecclesiastical meetings of various denominations of Christians, and who witnesses their "vain jangling," must necessarily marvel at their "fables which minister questions." Certainly those teachers of the *canon* law often "understand not what they say, nor whereof they affirm." 1 *Timothy* i. 5, 6. There is a constant appeal to Minutes, Precedents, Acts, Confessions, Digests, Discipline, and Constitutions; but all reference to "the Scripture of Truth," as the infallible standard by which their clamor would be silenced, seems studiously to be evaded. Babylonian law, civil law, statute law, canon law, common law, popish law, and even *martial* law, all are introduced. Heathen mythologists, the Shasters, the Koran, and the bulls of the Dragon's Beast, and *no* law at all, all are cited as authorities, and rules, and sanctions; but the precepts of Jehovah, and the mandates of Christ, are little more adverted to, than if those "oracles of God" had not been revealed, or the Rabbis had never seen or heard of them.

"IN NOMINE DOMINI!"

The crafty manœuvres of some modern ecclesiastical judicatures, *alias* Church Courts, remind us of the homely

and graphical proverbs which were common among our ancestors about the period of the Reformation. One, in particular, is frequently exhibited in the utmost exactitude. The pope's bulls generally commenced with the words—"In nomine Domini"—whence the shrewd and secret rebels to the pontifical usurpations used to say—

"In nomine Domini incipit omne malum."

All evil begins in the name of God!

That mournful and most wicked contradiction is thus exemplified. There is a reference, or an appeal to be decided; and the chief Rabbis have privately resolved how the matter shall be adjudged, so as to promote the craft, and to consolidate their own influence. But many of the members are new men, whose tempers and opinions are unknown. A series of artifices, therefore, is requisite to secure the wished result. The business must be postponed as long as possible, to evade all suspicion, until the views of such persons are satisfactorily ascertained. If the decision cannot be fully known, the debate is prolonged to weariness, that all the pompous D. Ds'. may announce their lordly opinions; and secure partisans among the "weaker brethren," by an oily tongue and flattering words, or by bullying menace intimidate and silence the refractory conscientious minority. When by those means it is ascertained that a majority are ready resolutely to uphold the malign jurisdiction and sentence, or to crush a God-fearing Christian, who merely defends his right and resists injury, and it may expose the system, any longer to protract the discussion, then one of the craftsmen proposes, before the votes are taken upon the question, that the

"Church Court" shall unite in prayer for the divine direction. Thus, after the example of the inquisitorial "brotherhood" of Arragon, "In the name of God begins all the evil." It is worse and more shocking, than to hear a *reader* pray, that the Lord would assist him by his Spirit to preach to the edification of the hearers, and immediately after pull an old thread-bare, thumb-bedaubed manuscript of dry metaphysics out of his pocket, to read to that part of the auditory who have so much regard for their divine invisible Master, and devotion enough to keep awake, while their teacher is *dozing*. After one occasion of that kind, a doctor in divinity remarked to me—"Whenever I hear one of the most noisy wranglers move that an ecclesiastical judicature shall arrest the business before them, and go to prayer, I am always sure that there is some mischief contrived, and some work of Satan to be done; and I stop my ears."

After prayer, for the sake of form, the *yeas* and *nays* are called with all apparent gravity. The majority have couched down to Diotrephes, Demetrius, Tertullus, and Alexander. Then some other "doctor" expresses his desire, that they shall return thanks to God for the happy adjustment of the case, and the great unanimity which had finally marked their proceedings. That same watchman assured me, that as soon as he had given his vote, or had refused to vote, he arose and walked towards the door; where he remained, waiting to leave the house, as soon as he discovered that his associates were about to add their pretended thanksgiving to the formality of prayer.

"Yet," he added, with impressive solemnity, "I am

convinced that a majority of the persons present on those occasions were upright. They had no conception of the secret machinery which was at work around them. Although they had resolved on which side they would vote; yet they were willing, as they thought, to change their opinion, if in answer to prayer Providence supernaturally urged them so to decide. Supposing that peace was preferable to further contention, without investigating the ulterior consequences, and relying upon fallacious interpretations of the Lord's injunctions, and upon improper applications of the divine promises, they doubtless felt sincerely thankful to God, that the altercation was terminated, by an actual decision upon the affair. They even seriously, although ignorantly, believed that the Church Court to which they belonged, really was one of those assemblages of Christian apostles to whom the gracious Redeemer declared—'Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' They had lost, for the time being, the remembrance of that 'death-blow to all ecclesiastical infallibility and haughtiness, that Peter and his brethren, whom our Lord addressed, neither had, nor could have, any official successors.'"

Some years have passed away, since that D. D., who used to ridicule his "*papistical diploma*," thus unfolded the arcana of ecclesiastical judicatories. Often have I been forced fully to assent to the truth of his characteristic and melancholy exposure of the obliquities which he had encountered, during his attendance among those litigating "*sons of peace* and *sons of thunder*."

Some of the corruptions to which that looker-on referred, are now masked; and some of the deficiencies in the management are now supplied by the party caucuses, under different names, that the Rabbis hold before the grand discordant sessions are convened. The counterpart, in several instances, has been so exact, that were it not certain, so few "doctors" know any thing of the Council of Trent; one might suppose that some of the craftsmen had been studying Fra Paolo Sarpi's history of that infamous "Church Court and Ecclesiastical Judicature;" that from the spirit, example, and acts of that "brotherhood," their predecessors, they might become initiated in the most prompt and efficient method to make right wrong, and falsehood truth—or as old Latimer pronounced, of some of his priestly contemporaries—"*they mingle and mangle, until they mingle-mangle all together.*"

I was visiting at a friend's house in the state of New-York, some years ago, and during my stay, a small "Church Court" was held in the vicinity. On the morning of the meeting, after I arrived at the meeting house to hear the sermon, one of the ministers remarked to me—"If you keep a good look out, I think you will see some genuine *priestcraft* to-day; for old C. one of the chief Rabbis, is as full of *notions* as he can hold." My friend however was mistaken; for the matter which he expected would have been discussed, was previously compromised.

"FABLES AND ENDLESS GENEALOGIES."

Three words are now adopted in common parlance upon the subject of the gospel ministry, which unfold the "spirit of antichrist." Although multitudes use them without any definite meaning, and the mischievous effects of them may elude the discernment of the inconsiderate and weaker brethren, yet as ordinarily understood and practically illustrated, they comprehend the quintessence of churchcraft.

Those three words are "LICENSE, ORDAIN, INSTAL."

From the surviving influence of popery, the appointments connected with the ministry of the New Testament have been completely "turned upside down." By that "cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive," and which attached an *indelible* character to the Romish priesthood, a series of "*orders*" was contrived through which the candidate must pass, from the menial and contemptible employ of sprinkling the popish brine, and ringing the masshouse "bell to fright away the devil," by successive exaltation, until he is decorated in a "goodly Babylonish garment," like pagan sacrificers, adorned with lawn and the mitre; and finally crowned with the pontifical tiara in "purple and scarlet color," branded with "names of blasphemy."

Then by making the ceremonial mummery essential to every vassal's salvation, and inseparable from the priestly office, and depending upon the officiator's jesuitical "*intention*," it was decided, that no one but an adept who

had *crept* through all the "*orders*" should sing mass, or could "*exorcise*" their master, "*the devil.*"

Most marvellous!—Protestant churches have partly adopted a similar antichristian course. To certain mysterious forms, as they are generally contemplated, a preacher of the gospel must submit, before he is permitted, or as it is commonly supposed, ere he is authorized to administer baptism. On the contrary, the Apostle Paul adjudged the office of baptism as far inferior to the duty of preaching; for he said, 1 *Cor.* i. 17, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel,"—and the twelve apostles unanimously announced to "the multitude of the disciples"—it is not right that "we should leave the word of God and serve tables." But as it is now imposingly termed, we *license* them to preach; *ordain* them to baptize; and *instal* them as "lords over God's heritage." After which, comes a recent invention by the finished craftsmen of our own times, pompously entitled, "the inaugural discourse; but what that emanation of worldly wisdom is, I cannot discover by "the Scripture of truth."

"*License.*"—The word *license*, as used in its ecclesiastical appropriation, implies the power to grant, or to withhold permission to officiate as a minister of the New Testament. According to the gospel, that authority belongs only to a society of believers. Under any possible aspect and modification, an "*Ecclesiastical Judicature,*" by whatever name that body is known, *is not a Christian church.* For example,—a faithful, qualified brother is unanimously invited to take the pastoral charge; but a

Church Court declare, that he shall not be the minister of that society who call for his official services. They have no more evangelical right thus to interpose their veto against the solicitation of the church, than the Jewish Sanhedrim were justified in commanding Peter and John "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." Those ancient "enemies of the cross of Christ," and their modern counterparts, are about equally audacious and criminal.

"*Ordain.*"—What is priestly *ordination?* There is some consistency in the popish account of that mysterious rite. The "frogs of the false prophet" croak and say, that it is the act by which capacity for the fulfilment of his Babylonian work is conveyed by the prelate to his inferior ecclesiastic. Whether that declaration is gospel truth or impious falsehood, the doctors who disagree may decide if they choose, but the two distant ends can be united.

Protestant Episcopalians, and their copyists, the Episcopal Methodists, both declare that their "*ordering*, and *ordaining*, and *consecrating*" are the means of conveying the Holy Ghost. Consequently, according to their own definition of a sacrament, there is not only "an outward and visible sign," but also "the inward and spiritual grace given." When a prelate lays his hands upon a priest, he says, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest." When one of their bishops is ordained, he is thus addressed—"Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a bishop." Whether the man who speaks or he who hears those authoritative

words, seriously believes that the former certainly bestows, and the latter truly receives the peculiar gifts and qualifications of the Holy Ghost during that ceremony, and at that precise moment, I refer to their own decision, and that of their "brotherhood." All I know of the matter is this ;—it is so declared in the book of common prayer, and in "the doctrines and discipline of the Methodist church ;" but there is not one hint in the New Testament, that any mortals possess the prerogative to impart, or the power to obtain, by "imposition of hands," that matchless boon.

Therefore, what *ordination* is among those who maintain ministerial parity, and who utterly discard all pretensions to confer either capacity or grace, is entirely beyond my short-sighted ken. Nevertheless, Rabbis talk, and the unthinking multitude believe, that there is something inscrutable in the ceremonial which is prescribed—and thus churchcraft is exalted.

"*Instal.*"—Then succeeds the installation, and a sonorous Babylonish word it is. Among papists with their cathedrals and convents, and English and Irish Episcopalians with the same edifices and appendages as "in the olden time" of jolly abbots, and their "*sisters*" and "*nieces*," frisky nuns, and even among the Scotchmen of the established "kirk," it has a definite meaning on account of its similitude ; for it comprises the fastening of a man in a "stall" like a horse, and giving him clothing of "purple and fine linen," with sumptuous fare every day for fattening, until he "waxes wanton." But what it implies in the United States, unless by a high-sounding appellative to sugar over the wormwood and venom of

churcheraft, and thus to deceive the unwary, is altogether inexplicable. At all events, neither Jesus, the "Head of the Church and Lord of all," nor his apostles, nor the original evangelists, nor the primitive Christians during the first three centuries after the gracious Redeemer's resurrection, either taught or practised what in the modern technology of churcheraft is denominated "*licensure*, or *ordination*, or *installation*," with their antichristian consociates, "*inaugural sermons*, and ecclesiastical judicatures." All of which combined are graphically depicted in the poet Virgil's unparalleled and marvellous biped, "a huge, deformed, and blind monster;" which doubtless is cousin german to the "*Beast that has two horns like a lamb, and speaks as a dragon.*" *Rev.* xiii. 11.

The evil is indigenous in the system; and for it there is no other cure, than that which "the testimony of Jesus as the spirit of prophecy" announced of its execrable parents, the Beast of blasphemy, and the Mother of Harlots,—its remediless overthrow, and utter extermination. To cite Martin Luther's quaint but forcible truism,—as long as "*every man carries a pope in his own belly*," only give them an eligible opportunity, unrestricted by divine grace, and if the concurrent history of fifteen hundred years can furnish ample evidence of the fact, they will manifest, especially in assembled multitudes of ambitious church-rulers, the truth of the Apostle John's vision: that the Beast, in the "power, and the seat, and great authority" of the dragon, is still alive and rampant,—"like unto a leopard, with the feet of a bear, and the mouth of a lion, speaking blasphemies."—*Rev.* xiii. 1—9.

III.—OPERATIONS OF CHURCH COURTS.

RABBI DEMETRIUS, A. M., WITH HIS CRAFTSMEN, AND RABBI TERTULLUS, L. L. D., MAKING FALSE ACCUSATIONS.

PROBABLY in no assemblies which are now formed, is there less Christian independence and moral courage and mental enlargement, than in Ecclesiastical Judicatures or Church Courts. "*The fear of man that bringeth a snare*" is the great instigating and governing principle of those anomalous bodies. There is more of the "*esprit du corps*" among those craftsmen, than amid any other classes of society; and when combined, as it often is, with an almost profound ignorance of every thing which is extra-official, it is not surprising that such preposterous displays of injustice, and even of fatuity, are common at their discordant convocations.

To persons who never reflect at all it appears very imposing, that every congregation "within the bounds" should be admitted to have a voice and a vote in an "inferior judicatory," and that there should be as many lay officers as there are preachers entitled to a seat in the Conference, Association, Synod, Convention, or General Assembly.

The Methodist Episcopal Conferences, however, acting more consistently, omit that incumbrance upon the hie-

rarchical machinery. As the business now is arranged, laymen are mostly for show and effect.

Watch those Church Courts whenever they assemble, and it will generally be discovered that all laymen vote with the preacher of his own congregation; or if a vacant society is represented, the delegate seldom opposes the notorious sentiments of the ruling Rabbis. The lay members of ecclesiastical judicatures are usually selected, because they are men of influence in the church and the world through their wealth; and who therefore are supporters of the aristocratical Church Court, on account of their being emphatically "of the earth, earthy." The attendance of laymen in all ordinary cases is disproportioned to the number of preachers; and while the "doctors" are confederated to execute their schemes, the laymen are without plan. Often they are total strangers to each other, "alike unknowing and unknown;" and confiding in "the simplicity and godly sincerity" of Diotrephes and Demetrius, they whisper forth their *aye*, when they ought to roar out their NO. In nine cases out of ten, a majority of the laymen, upon all the complex themes, could neither make an accurate statement of the cause which had been decided, nor adduce a rational argument for the vote which they had given. Their chief, if not their only plea would be this—"I have done as Bishop —— ordered, or as Doctor —— advised, or as Mr. —— wished." Such ecclesiastical assemblies, especially in almost all cases where individual reputation, or personal right, or Christian liberty is concerned, are worse than insulting mockery.

JESUITS.

It is not a little marvellous, that the papal legate, with his subordinate priests of Babylon in this republic, did not set in regular motion their own appropriate contrivance of "the mystery of iniquity" until the year 1829, when their first metropolitan convention was held in Baltimore. The wily arch-prelatical disciple of Ignatius Loyola must long have envied the operations of *that* "protestant Jesuitism." Perceiving at last with his watchful scrutiny, that some "men slept," and that many were giving "heed to fables and endless genealogies," and that others were making "their voices to be heard on high," and that the rest were inefficient watchmen in Zion, so far as "that Wicked's" machinations are concerned, "whose coming is after the working of satan, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness and strong delusion"—2 *Thess.* ii. 3—12—that "enemy" resolved to "sow his tares."

Thirty years ago an American popish council would have alarmed all our country. The crafty Jesuits well knew that fact. They therefore permitted the citizens to be drilled into *their* system under other names, and to exercise implicit faith and unreserved obedience towards assemblages of fallible men with the title of "Courts of Jesus Christ," and "Courts of Christ's house!" For they well know that the difference between believing in a protestant ecclesiastical judicature who *cannot err*, and a popish *infallible* council, is so metaphysical a distinction, that ninety-nine persons out of a hundred cannot comprehend it. Thus give them the countless majority

of physical energies to control, and they care nothing for the powerless individual mind. Hence, the treacherous proceedings of those pestiferous Romish conventions now are either totally disregarded, or openly approved.

Having therefore seen that protestant "Church Courts" were honored, and without a murmur obeyed, the pope's representative justly concluded that the ancient Babylonian council would not be objected to by those who obsequiously submitted to the *puny* offspring of Queen Rome! Thus he has fastened upon the papal Issachars in the United States, a burden that nothing will relieve but the scorchings of the same fire which will utterly consume "the Beast and the False Prophet." As their "canons, and decretals, and bulls" must unavoidably be tyrannical and antichristian, they are not included in this examination.

EPISCOPALIANS.

Episcopal Conventions also constitute no part of our investigation. The prelatical institution is necessarily aristocratical; and the principle itself of ministerial imparity admits the exercise of improper ecclesiastical authority, both legislative and judicial. Nevertheless, American Episcopal Conventions, however great may be the edifying inconsistency, are less chargeable with "lordship over God's heritage," and with the infringement of the rights and "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," and with attempts again to entangle their

congregations "in the yoke of bondage," than other similar representative bodies. Notwithstanding, they have multiplied impassable barriers to all enlarged Christian fellowship.

I never listen to an Episcopalian brother reciting—"I believe the communion of saints," and "I believe one catholic and apostolic church," but I am amazed! I look at his pulpit, and I perceive no minister can enter there, except he is of his own denomination, and dressed in certain popish habiliments,—and I am startled. I instantly pass over time and space, and say to myself,—that must be most discordant communion, and comical "*catholicity and apostolicity*," which would not permit Jesus of Nazareth, if again incarnate, to proclaim his own most "gracious words,"—nor Peter and John to "speak to the people all the words of life,"—nor Paul to preach, "Be ye reconciled to God," in a professedly evangelical "house of prayer."

I never hear an Episcopalian minister enounce from his liturgy—"From all uncharitableness and schism, good Lord deliver us! O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, grant us grace to follow thy blessed saints, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which thou hast prepared for those who unfeignedly love thee!"—I never think of those petitions as uttered according to the rubric, but I am bewildered. What a stupendous contrast between the language of devotion, and their insurmountable partition-wall, which excludes, as schismatics, not only "the holy apostles, and the messengers of the churches, who

are the glory of Christ," but also shuts out from the "one communion and fellowship" the very "elect and blessed saints," whom they pray for grace to follow, in their "virtuous and godly living," unto the kingdom of heaven!

All that contradiction may be very luminous to the initiated, but to my apprehension it is just as irreconcilable with the gospel and common sense, as the absurdities of transubstantiation, and the chicanery of Church Courts. When also, it is recollected, that the true cause of that incongruity is the portion of popery which the Anglican hierarchy originally retained with their priesthood and ritual, it might profitably be investigated, why it is that American Episcopal Conventions have hitherto exemplified so little of the natural tendency of the prelatical canons and government.

The ensuing illustrations are not selected as proofs that any of the parties designated expressly intend to occupy the station of the "Man of Sin," or to engage in his "all deceivableness of unrighteousness." But they testify that all ecclesiastical assemblies are prone to depart "from the living God," and are easily "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

CONGREGATIONALISTS.

All Congregational Consociations, Conferences, Conventions, Councils, and Associations, peremptorily deny that they possess any power over the churches. To

them no official act is delegated, which interferes with the right of Christians. The examination of candidates for the ministry on behalf of the brethren, the public recognition of pastors of churches, and meetings to consult and devise measures for the extension of the kingdom of Christ, are legitimate acts of ministers of the New Testament. Notwithstanding, a disposition has recently been manifested by some of the New England preachers, to interfere with the privileges of individual members, to control the rights and independence of the churches, and to interdict that free discussion which is the corner stone and palladium of religious and civil liberty.

In this connection, the Latin memento is of ineffable importance: "*Obsta principiis*"—stop the beginnings. The General Associations of Massachusetts and Connecticut have latterly "put out the cloven foot." They have expressed opinions adverse to the unrestricted enjoyment of our boasted immunities, and have virtually enacted, that ministers and churches shall proscribe all those itinerating "*fanatics*," who expound scriptural prophecies respecting the Roman pontiff and his apostasy, and who apply the eighth commandment to "stealers of men."

Churchcraft always begins with sly insinuations, by which unreflecting persons may be induced to believe, that the thing denounced is too bad to be tolerated, and of course, that its adherents "should be put out of the synagogue." That is done only as a humble and modest declaration of opinion. If the scheme is not opposed, it next assumes the mild tone of recommendation from those who "watch for souls." As the unsuspicious followers

of the Lamb anticipate no mischief, the mandate next is issued, as emanating from the authority which Christ has committed to his ministers; and implicit and prompt obedience with "due subordination and present submission" to the "*decretals*" is required.

A conscientious protestant who refuses to couch down to the burden, cannot now be transferred to the "dungeon of despair," or to the ecclesiastical bonfire; but other inquisitorial tortures equally agonizing are applied. The craftsmen malign his character, injure his business, and in every form harass and persecute, and do "much evil" to the stedfast disciple; whom, if possible, they make a "gazing stock, both by reproaches and afflictions." All which has recently been exhibited, even around the "cradle of American liberty."

Those general associations, however, have encountered an opposition which the projectors of those schemes probably did not anticipate. They have discovered to their deep mortification, that the land of the Pilgrims is not the soil to which they can transplant that hell-born exotic, *ecclesiastical despotism;* with which to crush the "great hearts," and the "valiants for the truth," who devoutly exult in the triumphant achievements of their ancestors. It infallibly demonstrates that their claim is a mischievous nuisance, when our inestimable birthright, transmitted to their descendants by the glorified Christian puritans, is assailed and attempted to be grasped under the bewitching garb of a "*pastoral letter!*"

BAPTISTS.

Of all the religious denominations in the United States, it might be supposed that churchcraft could altogether be excluded from among the Baptists. Nevertheless, two recent circumstances evince that there is no consociation of men whom ecclesiastical authority will not vitiate.

Doubtless, many of those who have been led astray in reference to the Bible Society, and the adoption of novel translations of the Holy Scriptures, sincerely believe that they are thereby promoting the glory of the Redeemer, and the salvation of mankind. The avowed object is most imposing—the safe preservation of the Scriptures, in all the purity and fidelity of accurate translations into the vernacular tongues: but general combination would far better accomplish that mighty result, than sectarian effort. Therefore, some other motive must have impelled a disorganizing measure that can only produce uncertainty among the heathen, when different versions of the Bible, as "the oracles of God," are presented for their acceptance.

It is a fundamental law among Baptists, that their Associations, upon no pretext, or in any form, shall exercise any authority in doctrine or order. All that an Association legitimately can do, is to declare, that a church cannot be received, or shall not any longer be considered as a member of that union. What then can be thought of the following decision in moral casuistry and church discipline?

One of the Baptist Associations in Georgia, lately determined upon this case. A man slave, and a member of

a Baptist church, had cohabited with a woman, also a professor of religion, according to custom, without the obligations of the matrimonial covenant. The man was hired by the Baptist slaveholder to a person at a distant plantation. There he formed a connection with another woman, still retaining his membership in the church. The woman from whom he had been severed, also permitted the visits of another man. After some time, the man was recalled by his fellow Christian, the slaveholder, to his own plantation; and to gratify them, the second woman with whom he associated was permitted to accompany him. After his return, his first female companion claimed his affections. To silence all female disputes, he lived with both of them! Finally, the church resolved, that he must not consort with two woman, but might choose to which of them he would cleave; which arrangement was effected.

The church demanded of the Association, What is the rule of duty in cases of separation of male and female members of the church, by sale or hire? That "Church Court" decreed, that the separation of men and women slaves by sale or hire, at a distance which precludes personal intercourse, is considered by God as equivalent to death; and therefore, that each party is exonerated from all obligations, and is at liberty to form a new connection, just as freely as if the other was deceased! Now it is certain, that upon any other topic, Baptist churches would not have authorized such churchcraft, or tolerated such a "cloak for their sin." No body of men in any civilized nation, except a "Church Court," would thus delibe-

rately proclaim to the world, a brazen-faced falsehood as undeniable fact, that *persons living are dead.* No human beings, but an "Ecclesiastical Judicature," would audaciously declare, that incessant uncleanness, comprising fornication, adultery, and polygamy, is compatible with the profession of religion, and unexceptionable in a member of a Christian society.

METHODISTS.

Conferences among Episcopal Methodists are exclusively hierarchical assemblies. Until within a few years past all their proceedings were conducted in the profoundest secrecy; for no person, except their own preachers, could obtain admission within the church during their sessions.

That there was some repugnant churchcraft in Methodist Conferences formerly, is now well known. I was in Baltimore in the year 1824, during the meeting of the Methodist General Conference, and having occasion, without delay, to see one of the British delegates, Mr. Reece, who was then shut up in the conclave in Eutaw street, it was with some difficulty that I obtained access to him. He finally left the house, and after having arranged the object for which I was anxious to see him, he denounced, in energetic language, the censurable practice of excluding the brethren from their deliberations. He also decidedly objected to the aristocratical principles and measures which predominated throughout their sessions;

and I am convinced, that he and his colleague returned to England with a far less favorable opinion of American Methodism, in reference to its government, than they possessed when they arrived in New York.

The controversy between the original dissidents who formed the existing societies of primitive Methodists, was attended with the usual effects of such contests. On the part of authority were displayed all the vexatious contrivances which irritated pride and disappointed ambition could put into operation; and the oppressed realized an injured reputation, betrayment by friends, alienation of families, and pecuniary embarrassment. The pages of the Methodist Protestant and other publications make known a series of ingenious devices to crush rebels, and exalt the ecclesiastical power, from which even a Jesuit prelate might learn additional "juggling." Those evils flow from John Wesley's inviting whom only he pleased, to sit in Conference with him as their ecclesiastical head. The Wesleyan system virtually included the slavish dogma of that haughty Anglican prelate, Horsley. In the British parliament, that semi-papist hierarch declared—"The people have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them." Such, in truth, *was* the cardinal doctrine of original Methodism! Even now the Conferences retain all jurisdiction, both as to doctrines and discipline. All the public property, although not nominally, in fact, is vested in them, and the members have no alternative but implicit subjection, or an abandonment of the connection.

The Methodist Conferences, from their primitive re-

gular organization in 1784 to the present period, have constantly developed, in a very *edifying* manner, the denial of their own creed of faith, and the abrogation of their own discipline. Within the last two years especially, have been disclosed the following choice and *lovely* features of that Beast, to whom "the dragon gave his power, and his seat, and great authority."

INQUISITORIAL TEST.

The New York Conference enacted a "*gag law*" and a "*stop law!*" By the "gag law" no preacher was allowed to proclaim the doctrine, or to enforce the discipline of his own church; both which he had solemnly engaged to do "by the Holy Ghost," when he was ordained. By the "stop law" no man could be admitted as a minister, who would not virtually first engage to cast the words of Jehovah behind him, and when he saw a thief that he would consent with him, and that he would become a partaker with adulterers. *Psalm* l. 17, 18. It must, however, with exultation be added, that the above compound load was so heavy and galling, that Issachar himself would not couch down, and bow his shoulders to bear those two Babylonish burdens. But the outrageous system was enforced at the Philadelphia Conference in 1838!

PRELATICAL POWER.

It was an essential part of that usurpation, which was enacted at the Council of Trent, to impede free discussion, and to extinguish "the light and the truth;" that

no topic and no measure should be proposed for deliberation, unless it had first been approved by the Court of Rome, and afterwards was introduced by the presiding cardinal legate. Consequently, every thing was decided exactly as "the Beast" enjoined. Rebels were vilified and ejected. The timid were menaced and affrighted. Time-servers were cajoled and bribed. The sons of *false* peace consented to become servants unto tribute. Thus doing "evil with both hands earnestly, they uttered their mischievous desire, and so they wrapped it up; for the best of them was a brier, and the most upright was sharper than a thorn hedge." *Micah* vii. 3, 4.

It might be presumed that some prelates have studied the proceedings of the chief Rabbis and craftsmen at that infamous "Church Court." In the year 1837, sixty years after the promulgation of the Declaration of Independence in the United States of America, Methodist bishops claim and exercise that grand papistical and imperial prerogative to determine what subjects, resolutions, motions, and reports shall be submitted for examination and debate.

Neither Peter, nor James, nor Paul, although acknowledged by the brotherhood to be the "holy apostles of Jesus Christ," and speaking by his authority the dictates of the Holy Ghost, thus silenced all discussion at the general meeting in Jerusalem. Barnabas, Paul, Peter, and James, although they were all commissioned by their "exalted Prince and Saviour," spake not one word until after they were wearied out with the "much disputing" of the brethren and the elders. Notwithstanding, modern

prelates, who promised to "*shew themselves gentle*," execute the most objectionable usurpation which either hierarchical or regal tyranny ever devised, for the imprisonment of the mind, for the debasement of the heart, and for the extinction of conscience.

If, however, at his "ordaining," the bishop actually "received the Holy Ghost for his office and work," it is certain that every person is bound implicitly to admit that all his acts are infallible. Therefore, the Methodist "*incendiary fanatics*" are involved in this difficulty;—in refusing to couch down to that prelatical burden, either they rebel against the highest lawful jurisdiction, or they only oppose resolute manufacturers of unscriptural authority. There they are squeezed and incarcerated in that dilemma. The Lord grant that they may be extricated in triumph, by the rooting up of the Beast's horns!

DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE.

It is the established doctrine of the Methodist Episcopal church, that all persons who are admitted into their societies shall "desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." That solicitude must be shown by its fruits. Among which evidences, it is emphatically announced, that they shall not buy or sell "men, women, or children, with an intention to enslave them." In other words, they shall not hold slaves, although they may purchase human beings expressly for immediate emancipation.

In section 9th of the "*Temporal Economy of the Methodist Episcopal Church*," it is declared—"When

any travelling preacher becomes an owner of a slave or slaves, *by any means*, he shall forfeit his ministerial character in our church, unless he executes a legal emancipation of such slaves." Nevertheless, the Methodist travelling preachers drive and traffic slaves, and say,—"Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich;" and although they are professed "shepherds of the flock of the slaughter," yet they pity not the sheep who are "drawn unto death, and ready to be slain."

It is also enacted—"No slaveholder shall be received into full membership in our society, till the preacher has spoken to him freely and faithfully on the subject of slavery:"—which, if it means any thing conformably to the declaration in "the Nature, Design, and General Rules of our United Societies," it must imply that the slaveholder is a hypocrite in offering himself for membership, and that the preacher is either an idiot or a treacherous watchman.

It is also declared in section 9th—"Every member of the society who sells a slave, except for mercy and humanity, shall be expelled the society." The same censure is directed against all those who buy slaves, and will not "execute a legal deed for their emancipation." Remember that proviso:—to sell "men, women, and children with an intention to enslave them, is mercy and humanity," in a man who never "desired to be saved from his sins!" Self-contradiction can no farther go. Notwithstanding all those rules, Southern Methodists are slaveholders, who buy, sell, and exchange men, women, and children, even their nominal fellow Christians, with

no more sensibility or remorse, than they would purchase a calf, or traffic a horse.

That inconsistency and violation of all decorum and Christian uprightness are perfectly venial, when compared with another part of the system. Honest Methodists, who "hold fast their profession," are reviled and persecuted. As the natural consequence, the decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies have lost their influence. Such wilful departure from the faith and discipline, unless it is duly repented of and a prompt reformation take place, must insure the inscription of Ichabod upon the churches. In all other cases than "Ecclesiastical Judicatures," any community who would thus act, would be deemed unworthy of social intercourse, except with persons guilty of similar turpitude.

The ensuing specimen illustrates the ugliness and mischiefs of that churchcraft which may aptly be delineated in "the words of Agur," *Prov.* xxx. 13, 14—"O how lofty its eyes! and its eyelids are lifted up; whose teeth are as swords, and its jaw-teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men."

A Methodist preacher had within his circuit a milliner, whose business was a public benefit for the convenience of the vicinity. As she had no children, the profits of her shop were chiefly devoted by her, with her husband's cordial assent, to the purposes of Christian benevolence, and to hospitality for the entertainment of ministers of the gospel and other Christian brethren. On several occasions that preacher sharply reproved Mrs. D. for putting knots of ribbon on the women's bonnets which

were made by her. She modestly excused herself, that she was obliged to comply with the orders which were given to her, or that she must dismiss her operatives, and abandon the business. The preacher, Mr. Y., haughtily warned her against sanctioning that conformity to the world, which the Methodist discipline, according to his exposition of it, so sternly condemned. Perplexed by his menacing rebukes, Mrs. D. at length informed her husband of the colloquies which she and their preacher had held. When Mr. Y. again visited the house, Mr. D. was present. After the minister had finished his caustic lecture to Mrs. D., her husband coolly remarked to this effect:—" Mr. Y., you say that coats cut short and round in front, are part of the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. Now I wish that you would answer me one question—When you carried on the tailoring business in B., did you refuse to make coats, because persons would have them shaped contrary to your notion, and our Methodist fashion?" The preacher's pride was so mortified, that after uttering a severe reprimand, he instantly left them in all the feeling of wounded priestly dignity.

Mr. Y. promptly complained of Mr. D. to the Quarterly Conference for wantonly insulting him. The popular opinion, both of the members of the Methodist church, and of all the other Christian brethren around, was decidedly against the preacher. Nevertheless, to avoid a convulsion in the society, through the minister's unbending obstinacy, that " Church Court" decided, that Mr. D. should apologize to Mr. Y. for his unintentional offence. Mr. D. assented, provided the preacher would promise no

more to torment his wife with his impertinence respecting her business. That condition the lordly Diotrephes spurned. Mr. D. would not submit to the decision of the Conference upon any other condition, and he was immediately excluded.

Mrs. D. became so mentally disordered that she dwindled into partial insanity and idiotism; and he sunk into uselessness, dependence, and debasement. Therefore, from all the roguery and tyranny of Church Courts, we should ever devoutly pray—"Good Lord, deliver us!" Amen.

PRESBYTERIANS.

Presbyterian "Ecclesiastical Judicatures, alias Church Courts," are full of those proceedings which gradually have been expanding their potency of mischief, until the principal confederated craftsmen, in mercantile phraseology, have dissolved partnership, but not by mutual consent.

Amid so many intricacies, it is almost impossible to unravel the complex machinery of their craft. However, a few facts will assist us to comprehend something of the operations of Presbyterianism.

COMMITTEE OF BILLS AND OVERTURES.

One of the *arch*-contrivances is the "*Committee of Bills and Overtures.*" To them is confided the introduction into the Church Court, of all topics for general

discussion. If that Committee choose to bury any motion, the member who proposed it to them may introduce it to the "Ecclesiastical Judicature." But wo be to him!—Not only will his resolution be discarded, but he will ever afterwards be branded as one of the followers of Paul and Silas who "turned the world upside down." The effect is this:—all measures which can best promote the craft, are first introduced. If there are any knotty and crabbed references from Synods, or Presbyteries, or Sessions, which cannot be evaded, but that contain casuistical questions which jeopard the aristocratical sway, or which it is contrary to the interest of the secret chiefs to decide, every possible manœuvre is executed to impede the discussion of them; or they are cunningly postponed, until it is hypocritically pretended, that too many of the members have withdrawn, the "Ecclesiastical Judicature" is too empty, or there is not time for the investigation and settlement of such a momentous topic. Thus the all-inspiring themes which are connected with the cause of morals and religion, are laid *under* the table, where they repose, "still as midnight, and silent as death."

The appointment of a "committee to prepare business," if men were infallible in judgment, would be most beneficial; but to commit to resolute partisans, who pretend to be neither upright nor impartial, the power of deciding what measures shall be introduced, and what propositions rejected, or of so arranging the documents submitted to them, that any motion which they disapprove must unavoidably be postponed, is the consummation of church-

craft. That system is making progress in other assemblies, who boast of "free discussion."

In more than one instance it has recently extended to an absolute hindrance of members from speaking upon topics presented for debate. There is the prolific root of great evil in those "committees to prepare business," and they must be kept within severe restrictions, or other conventions and convocations will soon be as fully cursed by the operation of "*gag law*" and "*stop law*," as Church Courts, and the Congress of the United States. The sons of civil and religious liberty must watch carefully, and be very cautious what masters they voluntarily take on their backs to ride and *bridle* them. A little *fanatical* irregularity in a meeting easily can be suppressed; but the absolute extinguisher of investigation, and argument, and debate, is ominous, fearful, and agonizing as that darkness which was felt, when no man saw another, or rose from his place for three days, throughout all the land of Egypt.

From four different occurrences we can accurately learn something of Presbyterian "Ecclesiastical Judicatures."

THIRD CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA.

Who of the senior citizens of Philadelphia has forgotten the contentions and the divisions which originated in the churchcraft which was contrived by two or three elders? Who has ceased to remember the duplicity, the obstinacy, and despotism of the Philadelphia Presbytery? Who does not recollect the two-faced proceedings of the Synod? Who does not know that the sole cause of the

whole commotion was the personal dislike of a few individuals to Mr. Ely? Who has banished from his memory the scenes for several days which were exhibited in the General Assembly? The unconstitutional ejection of the Synod of Philadelphia, and the plunder of the congregation of about twenty-five thousand dollars, as a bribe to induce two or three *ruling elders*, who would have made suitable counsellors for the scorpion-using Rehoboam, to withdraw from a society which they had embroiled in strife and disorder.

WILLIAM M'CALLA.

What person can have obliterated from his remembrance the appeal of Mr. M'Calla from the decision of the Synod of Kentucky? Has the revolting evidence which was adduced in that case lost one particle of its detestable qualities? Do not the palliations of indecorum, the magisterial rebukes of disobedience to the Rabbis, the wrangling on politics, the attempts to criminate youthful ardor in the defence of truth, the untiring endeavors to wrap up that which could not be justified, and the determined resolution, that from the first to the last was manifested, to condemn the innocent, thereby to exonerate the guilty, still exist in recollection, in all the freshness of the ever present reality? The decision was given diametrically contrary to the testimony, and to righteousness. Why was that course pursued, and why did the cause so terminate? Because it was necessary to support the dignity of "Church Courts."

SLAVERY.

Many citizens in Philadelphia still remember the discussions which took place in the Presbyterian General Assembly, during the years 1815, 1816, 1817, and 1818. That controversy concerning slavery commenced with a reference from the Synod of Ohio, in 1815, who asked what course they should adopt concerning the Confession of Faith, which denounced all slaveholders as "stealers of men, sinners of the first rank, and guilty of the highest kind of theft." Were they obliged to receive such persons into their communion upon the testimony of certificates of membership, from the nominal churches composed chiefly or altogether of those transgressors who were condemned by their own creed? To that question, the Assembly returned only an evasive reply, which virtually affirmed that slaveholders were flagrant violators of the law of Christ, but that the brethren must receive them into their churches, or bear the consequences which might follow from any complaint against their rejection of the applicants. That duplicity augmented the difficulties. It transferred the inherent vexation from the "Ecclesiastical Judicatures" to individuals; and insured to every person, whether a preacher or elder, who believed the Confession of Faith, and was willing to enforce its doctrines in practice, all the inflictions of the slave-drivers' indignation, should they lay their merciless fangs upon any preacher or elder whom they might choose to denounce as their *troubler*. Notwithstanding the forcible arguments which were adduced, the decision full of subtilty was recorded,

and the slaveites instantly began "to smite with the fist of wickedness."

I was standing in the same pew, in the First Presbyterian church in Philadelphia, in 1817, with John B. Romeyn, John McLeod, and Jacob Broadhead, during the discussion upon George Bourne's appeal respecting his sermons upon slavery, which he had preached in Virginia, in 1814 and 1815. That elder who had been the principal contriver and actor in all the mischief and contentions which had agitated the Third Presbyterian congregation in Philadelphia, was pouring forth a stream of mingled gall and absurdity against Mr. Bourne. In the midst of that elder's invectives, Mr. McLeod remarked to the appellant—"Brother, when you lived in Virginia, you must have been among a company of terrible knaves. I hope the Lord will give you a safe deliverance from their ungodly clutches."

In 1818, after the Assembly had enacted that their own long acknowledged creed of faith was a nullity, they prepared and published a declaration respecting slavery: and thus they wrapped it up!—The Northern members strove to quiet their consciences, that it was *most expedient* to be at peace with the "menstealers," their brethren, and especially as they had jointly promulged a manifesto against the harsh treatment of slaves: and the Southern deceivers exulted, that they had so completely befooled and manacled their dough-faced consociates. That testimony was ordered to be read in every Presbyterian church throughout the United States. But it is most probable, that it was not enounced in one congregation: for when it

was republished by the American Anti-Slavery Society, four years ago, even its authenticity at first was disputed. Thus did they deny their own Confession of Faith, and vitiate their own discipline.

One of the most remarkable illustrations of Jesuitism in modern history was developed by that Church Court. They enjoined upon all their preachers and members, "to use their earnest and unwearied endeavors to efface the blot of slavery, and "to obtain its complete abolition throughout the world;" and at the same time, poured out the vials of their wrath and unrighteousness upon George Bourne, one of their own ministers, who had honestly fulfilled their injunctions.

Seven years after, John D. Paxton, a Presbyterian preacher of Virginia, also endeavored literally to obey their expressed will in the pure work of mercy and duty. For that conscientious discharge of his own obligations and their recommendation, the teaching of his colored domestics the Christian religion, giving them a capacity for useful freedom, and then emancipating his slaves, he was so persecuted by his brother Presbyterians, that he was compelled to remove from that state; and has constantly since experienced their malignity.

Twenty years have subsequently elapsed; and now the Presbyterian slave-drivers admit that they are pronounced by that General Assembly of 1818, "the vilest of sinners"—and that if the doctrines of that body, then enounced, are true, the abolitionists are both correct and justifiable in all their principles, designs, and measures. Therefore, they loudly and resolutely demand the excision of that paper—

which was only issued as a cloak for injustice, if possible to conceal the ungodly proceedings of that Church Court, which was entirely swayed by George Baxter, Conrad Speece, and other "sinners of the first rank, and *guilty of the highest kind of theft.*"

DOCTRINES AND DISCIPLINE.

Deadly feuds exist between the several parties of Presbyterians; who may generally be classified, according to their own nomenclature, as old Calvinists, new school men, slaveholders, and abolitionists. The now manifested irreconcilable hostility has gradually been increasing for nearly ten years. At first the dispute was confined chiefly to the novelties which were attached to the religious revivals; combining an unusual style of theological exposition, with customs previously unknown during the devotional exercises.

Prior to that period, throughout their churches, the efforts for the missionary cause, whether in foreign countries or for domestic purposes, were comparatively feeble and inefficient. The increasing solicitude to support the American Board of Foreign Missions and the rapid enlargement of the Home Missionary Society, excited the attention and envy of men who had long been dormant in that great work of Christian philanthropy. It was, therefore, resolved to regain the control which had almost imperceptibly escaped from their grasp. Two plausible pleas for sectarian exclusiveness were invented. Bigotry was aroused by the alarm of false doctrine. Selfishness and pride were coaxed by the pretence that all missionary

operations should be directed by "*the church;*" which term as used to designate a number of distinct societies combined in one delegated "Ecclesiastical Judicature," under any appellative, is no more sanctioned by the New Testament, than the application of it by the Romanists to their phantom *idol*-god!

That all the theology which has been disseminated of late years is gospel, I do not assert; for part of it I cannot comprehend; and I seriously believe, that some of the controvertists themselves do not understand their own metaphysical conundrums. Either from the transcendent nature of the subjects, or the mental incapacity of the expositors, and listeners, and readers, to many of them may justly be applied the Lord's expostulation to Job—"Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?"—However, the "dreamers" have quarrelled, until they have disputed themselves upon the opposite sides of an impassable gulf; and all their ingenuity cannot now build a bridge across that fathomless pit. Indeed, could that mighty achievement be accomplished, *it is not desirable!* It will be far more advantageous to the cause of Christ, that the Presbyterians should be subdivided. All the slave-drivers, and their dough-faced confederates, like "wood, hay, and stubble," will inevitably amalgamate. The Rabbis and the Issachars may make a second confederacy. A third class might be consociated from the friends of Christian liberty and evangelical truth. Other dissidents can unite by the "elective affinity," which is a cabalistic *two-tongued* phrase, that means either the *discord*, or the *communion* of saints, according as it is applied.

That the churches of Christ should sustain and direct missionary operations is a self-evident truism: for no other persons will propel that holy cause. But the real question is this—which is the most efficient method to secure the desirable result? *Disputation concerning the means only impedes the attainment of the end.* Years have been wasted upon that mischievous controversy, while satan has instigated the strife; and people have "walked in darkness, who might have seen the great light."

Those two points have constituted the ostensible themes of vituperation in Presbyterian "Church Courts," until the gospel of peace has almost lost its power, and the conversion of sinners has been forsaken for the obtaining of proselytes. The energies of the prominent craftsmen have been devoted to secure the ascendency in the principal "Ecclesiastical Judicatures;" while the lofty claims of equity and truth have openly been sacrificed to the sinister scheme of attaining the preeminence; whence the bond of union is broken, and during the present generation never more can be consolidated.

The most imposing fallacy respecting the management of missionary operations by "Church Courts" is this—that voluntary societies are irresponsible institutions, and that the managers of them, not being subject to the control of an "Ecclesiastical Judicature," may conduct their affairs as they please; and whether they duly use or pervert the public money, they are not amenable to any superior authority; and, therefore, that the power which is thus conferred upon a few executive officers, should not be committed to them. Whence, according to the logic of

the doctors, it is inferred—that it is preferable and more evangelical, to transfer the management of the funds and the direction of affairs to the subordinates of a "Church Court," than to intrust the same concerns to the guidance of the Christians themselves, by their own elective agents.

Now, it would puzzle Solomon, himself, to point out how an executive committee, nominated by a "Church Court," can be more obligated for the faithful discharge of their duties, than a similar body elected immediately by the members of a society. The accountableness in voluntary consociations is direct; but the management under the jurisdiction of an "Ecclesiastical Judicature" is totally exempt from efficient control. The committee transfer any merited censure to the "Church Court," whose mandates they obey; and they are a nonentity when they have dissolved. As expressed by the fiat of the majority, the doings of the "Supreme Head of the Church" are infallible; and there is no power to redress their wrongs, or to punish their flagitiousness.

All the wrangling to induce Christians to transfer their donations to institutions superintended by their own "Church Courts," is only an artful contrivance to augment and perpetuate antichristian authority. By appealing to sectarian prejudices, it binds burdens upon the members; and fetters them, while they are unconscious of the process, and of their own debasement. "Ecclesiastical Judicatures" are the least responsible assemblages upon earth. They act with perfect impunity; and for the errors which they maintain, and the calumny which they disseminate, and the injustice which they approve or commit,

they fear no consequences. Each member claims to be innocent, although the whole confederacy are transgressors. The act is done by the majority; and yet every individual may protest against the unexpected results of his own iniquitous vote. True was the remark of a Pennsylvania judge, twenty-three years ago—"I highly esteem the ministers and officers of the churches whom I know, in all their relations of life; but when they are combined in a Church Court, they perpetrate acts of iniquity which few other persons would have the hardihood to attempt."

The transfer of money for Christian benevolence to the management of "Church Courts," as they at present are constituted, is almost as repugnant to common sense and piety, as it is to aid in the erection of a masshouse, or convent, or theatre. It is supplying the means to prolong strife between the professed followers of the Lamb; and to extend "that spirit of antichrist, which is in the world."

For years past, the power to impel the Presbyterian ecclesiastical machinery has been vacillating. But by an extraordinary concentration of effort, a headstrong majority in their General Assembly of 1837, resolved, *per fas aut nefas*, to seize the only opportunity which they conceived they should ever possess, to eject their opponents, and to seize the "Lord's heritage." Whether the denunciations which the majority of that Church Court made against their fellow servants are true or false—whether the alleged mischievous effects of the Home Missionary Society's operations be fact or fiction—and whether the proscribed churches and ministers in the states of New York and Ohio are deserving of the contemptible ana-

thema which was fulminated against them, can easily be decided by the ensuing criterion.

That man who is charged with a crime, and can only be punished without an impartial trial, and by the utter abrogation of all the laws of equity and the gospel, is either innocent, or cannot be found guilty. Persons who thus denounce Christians, and condemn their antagonists, who are not proved to be offenders, unless by "*common fame*," that is, *by the calumny of their accusers*, whatever may be their pretexts, may read their own character in *Psalm* xciv. 5, 20, 21:—"They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They frame mischief by a law. They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent"—and then impiously promulge, that their "throne of iniquity" has fellowship with God.

Their own boastful declarations are ample evidence upon this melancholy topic. Having the power then to crush the defenceless, as they said, they would exercise it; lest when their next grand "Church Court" shall be held, they should be a minority. That avowal is the insolence of triumphant despotism; but whether it is Christian humility, righteousness, and brotherly love, those *Rabbis* may decide.

George A. Baxter, a Virginian preaching slave-driver, whose portrait Mr. Keys, an elder and member of that Assembly, of 1837, has so accurately delineated, candidly explained that "mystery of iniquity." The Presbyterians of Virginia, for thirty years past, have been very harmonious in their theological opinions. If there be a line of

demarcation half-way between the Old School ultras, and the New School men, the Virginians were stationed within the boundaries of the latter division. There must be a powerfully exciting cause, which could so suddenly have driven them from exemplary moderation, to take the van, as champions of the "*high church*" party. Mr. Baxter attested, that one grand motive was to insure *the continuance of slavery among the Presbyterians.* Thus they make their resolute determination to persist in the highest crime against God and man, the plea to extenuate their arrogance and malignity towards their brethren. It is manstealing churchcraft in all its rottenness and criminality.

Some recent transactions of ecclesiastical assemblies, with their extraordinary decretals, recal to remembrance a fact narrated by John Fox, in his martyrology.

Of the "bloody six articles" which were enacted by Henry VIII., king of England, that primitive puritan declared: it might be supposed that they had been "*written with the blood of the dragon, and by the claws of the devil!*" If there are not some anathemas in the United States, of which the same judgment may truly be pronounced, then their own clerks have falsified their records.

That immortal historian relates that, on one occasion three protestants were condemned for disbelieving those bloody articles, or as the act was called, "*the whip with six strings;*" and three papists were sentenced to death for denying the regal supremacy. They were ordered to be publicly executed at the same time—the three protest-

ants to be burned as heretics; and the three papists to be "hanged, drawn, and quartered" as traitors. They were dragged from the prison through the streets in pairs, on three hurdles, to Smithfield. A protestant and a papist were chained togethed upon each hurdle. The papists reviled their Christian companions with the utmost malice and anger; and avowed, that "to be carried to execution with the gospellers, was more bitter to them than death itself."

While the three protestants were burning, and the three papists were undergoing their butchery, a foreigner, who was watching that almost unparalleled monstrosity, thus expressed his surprise:—"Deus bone! quomodo hic vivunt gentes? hic suspenduntur papistæ, illic comburuntur anti-papistæ." Gracious God! how can people live in this country? Here they hang papists, and they burn anti-papists.

The analogy between that popish tragedy, and the scene exhibited by the majority of the last Presbyterian General Assembly, is very impressive. By the same fierce "*act*," they attempted to decapitate New School stern Presbyterians, and Old School half Congregationalists, old Calvinist anti-slavery men, and pro-slavery new lights. They tried to impale believers in the "Act and Testimony" to please "stealers of men," and exonerated their inflexible opponents to preserve the churchcraft. In that marvellous position now stands the Presbyterian "*church militant!*" They are the wonder of persons ignorant of "Ecclesiastical Judicatures," the stumbling block of weak brethren,

the lamentation of sincere Christians, and the reproach of the infidel and the ungodly.

It is, however, consolatory to reflect that already David's declaration has been accomplished:—"The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands, in the net which they hid is their foot taken." *Psalm* ix. 15, 16. The tower which the Presbyterian craftsmen intended to raise to heaven is stopped, for the Lord hath so confounded the language of the builders, that they cannot understand one another's speech. Mr. Breckinridge and Mr. Plummer, notwithstanding their vituperative ribaldry and anathemas, are menaced by the myrmidons of Judge Lynch, and the ecclesiastical stealers of men. The contrivers of the *deceptive* "Act and Testimony" concerning slavery, in 1818, must "eat their own words," and substitute "lies in hypocrisy" for "the truth as it is in Jesus." Those D. D. D.'s who formerly were accomplices in mischief, George Baxter and William Hill, exemplify the old proverb respecting the disagreement of them who work iniquity, and Ishmael himself is peace and concord incarnate, contrasted with some Presbyterian "wild men!"

Why did not the Rabbis cut off the Third Presbytery of New York? Not from justice or "brotherhood," but because they are afraid of the chancellor of that state, with his adverse decision.

The collisions which have occurred within a few years past, among other denominations, are the natural consequences of Church Courts, as the principal actors in those contentions have virtually or actually confessed in their own magazines and controversial publications.

REFORMED PRESBYTERIANS.

There was a startling exhibition among those craftsmen, in a Church Court, about twenty-five years ago, in the case of David Graham. Some of the arcana which were disclosed on that occasion, showed forth prime "Jesuit juggling," the contrivance and execution of which, John Hughes himself might almost envy. The pamphlets which were issued on that occasion, "let out some secrets worth knowing." They demonstrated that Ecclesiastical Judicatures are not always the abodes of equity and decorum; or in the language of a modern commentator on *Judges* xx. 2—"Christians sometimes lose sight of this—that they come together as 'the people of God,' and are bound to demean themselves accordingly, in their public assemblies; and consequently *act very much out of character.*"—*Bush.*

The late division among their Church Courts is also very instructive. Walking some time since in Chambers street, New York, I looked at the house where I formerly heard John McLeod expound the Scriptures, and saw inscribed on the front, "*Transfiguration Roman Catholic Church.*" Well, thinks I to myself, that is a long jump at once from a Reformed Presbyterian "kirk," to a Jesuit masshouse. Afterwards in passing along Prince street, I read upon a large building "*Reformed Presbyterian Church.*" Then pursuing my course down Sullivan street, my eye was attracted by another notice, "*First Reformed Presbyterian Church.*" That was too much

for my gravity. When the mystery was explained, and their complicated quarrel was unfolded, I could not but fancy a Church Court personified; and standing in Chambers street, in front of John McLeod's pulpit, bemoaning in the Psalmist's pungent language,—" We are become a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us!" The sight of the "*Transfiguration Roman Catholic Church*," made me sick ever since of modern protestant Ecclesiastical Judicatures.

ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERIANS.

The ruling principles of Church Courts are like a "nose of wax," which can be made to assume any shape, and color, and size, that the craftsmen please. A practical illustration of it was given to me by a minister of the gospel who still resides in Philadelphia. An undecided appeal was before the Presbyterian General Assembly, which excited great interest. I asked him, "How will the case be determined?" He remarked, "If equity or impartiality presided, the appellant would be released from the Synod's unjust censure. But ecclesiastical laws now are like three strong but flexible sticks, put together after the shape of the wicket among cricket players, through which the appellant must pass. If he is submissive to the doctors, will take off his hat, can make a low and graceful bow, and thankfully consents to be 'led by the nose,' the managers of the majority will bend the sticks outwardly, so that he slips through with-

out molestation; but if he will think for himself, and will not believe as infallible all the contradictions that the doctors proclaim, they drive the sticks inward, crush his ribs, and having thus wounded him, they depart, leaving him half dead." It was a graphical picture of American Church Courts to the life.

ANDREW STARK.

The recent case of Andrew Stark exhibits about as edifying a specimen of Dominican Jesuitism, as the staunchest opponent of popery, and the most determined advocate of Congregationalism can desire, as a battering ram against modern Babylonish councils. His affair verifies, to the permanent stigma of Church Courts, that more justice can be obtained even through a secular tribunal, than from a conclave of "*lordly canon Rabbis!*"

The Associate Presbytery of Albany have extensively dispersed *their* narrative of the ecclesiastical proceedings relative to Mr. Stark. As this is one of the most recent acts of an Ecclesiastical Judicature, and published expressly as an elaborate "*defence of their character and dignity*," I shall transcribe two passages,—one asserting their inquisitorial authority and unlimited jurisdiction, and the other exhibiting the impious manner and childish simplicity, in which Church Courts pervert the holy Scripture, to sanction their audacity and ungodliness.

The first paragraph of the Associate Presbytery's edifying narrative, is in these words,—and it presents to us a charming specimen of a modern protestant Church Court: "Jesus Christ, our glorious King, has appointed *judi-*

catories in his church, for the exercise of government and discipline. To them he has promised his presence and Spirit; and to *their decisions* he has most solemnly commanded respect and obedience from all the faithful. It is greatly to be lamented, therefore, that among his professed disciples any should be found partaking so far of the insubordinate spirit of the age, as to manifest a want of respect for the *Courts of Christ's house*, and to treat their decisions not only with neglect, but, in some instances, also, with open contempt. But notwithstanding this, we are *fully assured* that our exalted Head is still declaring to all *Ecclesiastical Courts*, constituted in *his name* and by *his authority*—'Whatsoever ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' "—*Narrative of the Proceedings of the Associate Presbytery of Albany*, p. 3.

Now, contemplating all the differences between the character, relations, and circumstances of the Court of Rome, and the Associate Presbytery of Albany, there is not in the *Magnum Bullarium Romanum*, a more pestiferous development of antichristian insolence and papistical mendacity, than the preceding effusion. It is almost a parody of the first section of the bull of Pope Pius V., called "The damnation and excommunication of Elizabeth, queen of England." I prefer the consistent usurpation of "the man of sin and the son of perdition," to the lamentable foolery of *soi-disant* protestants, who, by the verdict of an impartial jury, have virtually been denounced as official calumniators.

Such is their contemptible arrogance! What is their irreligious chicanery?—They presented a "libel," as they denominate it; that is, as the word means, a *defamatory satire* against Mr. Stark; and among other similar ecclesiastical vagaries, are the two ensuing profound *master-pieces* of Presbyterian theology!

"CHARGE II.—To defame and slander Church Courts, is a sin deserving of censure according to the word of God."

To prove which, they adduce these two citations from the Bible:—"Obey them that have rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." *Heb.* xiii. 17. "Likewise also, these dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." *Jude* 8.—*Narrative*, p. 10.

The comical popish dogma which the Associate Presbytery of Albany assert in their "*libel*," and their alleged demonstration of it by the authority of the Apostles Paul and Jude, are almost as ingenious reasoning, and as exact logic, as the proof which the priests of "Babylon the Great" adduce for the papal infallibility, and the supreme and universal jurisdiction of "the Mother of Harlots and of the Beast that carrieth her." The Jesuits quote *Psalm* viii. 6—8. David resounded the praise of Jehovah, because he had given to man "dominion over sheep, oxen, beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea."—Ergo, say those *honest* and *learned* exemplars of the Associate Presbytery of Albany, "*the sovereign pontiff of Rome is Lord God upon earth.*"

"CHARGE V.—To be guilty of injurious misrepresent-

ations of the acts of ministers and of Church Courts, is deserving of censure according to the word of God."

To sanction which part of their "libel," or *defamatory satire*, they refer us to *Acts* ii. 13, and *Romans* iii. 8, "Others mocking said, these men are full of new wine." "As we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say: let us do evil that good may come; whose damnation is just."—*Narrative*, p. 11.

Can such men be enlightened and sincere when they profess to be disciples of John Knox? Is any person so laden with two burdens of assinine stupidity and doltish credulity, that he will acknowledge the "judicial procedures" of such "Church Courts" to be infallible? Who will have the affrontery, except the Associate Presbytery of Albany, to affirm, that "Jesus Christ, our glorious King, has most solemnly commanded respect and obedience to their decisions," which manifestly emanate from Babylonian arrogance and inquisitorial malignity, or from marvellous ignorance? If I had no other alternative, I should profer to "kiss the pope's toe," and then to be kicked in the mouth by that representative of the dragon's beast, than to be belied, cuffed, and trampled upon by his pitiful imitators; who, during their "judicial procedures" of "injustice and persecution," gravely adjuge, that "the honor of Christ's ordinance and the edification of his body" require us patiently to submit to the "government and discipline" of such a "judicatory;" and to believe all their contradictory, semi-impious, and stultified "decisions" to be oracles issued in the presence and by the Spirit of "Him who is exalted Prince and Saviour."

Mr. Stark having been "*libelled*" by the Associate Synod, disregarded their proceedings, as the effect, not of truth and righteousness, but of interested partisans "under some strange excitement;" and, therefore, very evangelically he raised the standard of rebellion against an "Ecclesiastical Judicature" whose infatuated presumption in mandate would only have been equalled by his antichristian folly, had he obeyed it. That body, therefore, proceeded to measures which should enforce if possible their prior bull and anathema. Accordingly, the following choice specimen of Christian humility and protestant freedom was adopted.

"Whereas, due subordination to the authority of Church Courts requires any of their communion, and especially, any of their own members who may be under sentence of guilt, and who may feel themselves aggrieved by said sentence, to yield a present submission, and in the mean time to seek redress by such means as are in accordance with such subordination; therefore, resolved, that Mr. Stark be called to account, for continuing to preach in defiance" of us his rightful lords and masters.—*Minutes of the Associate Synod*, June 2, 1837.

The first paragraph of the narrative by the Associate Presbytery contains as much popery, when all the circumstances are considered, as one of Gregory Hellbrand's fulminations—and in the preceding "*act*," the Synod have embodied, in the form of a "*bull-canon*," all that Leo X. ever demanded of the reformers, or a popish inquisitor of an excruciated "heretic;" or a Carolina or Georgia preaching slave-driver of his lacerated victim. Look at the pictures.

There is *Anne Askew* upon the rack, with her whole corporeal frame dislocated, and the Romish priest reading to her—" Whereas, due subordination to the authority of the court of our lord god the pope, requires you, who are under sentence of guilt, to yield a present submission, and to seek redress for your unmerited tortures, by such means as are in accordance with such subordination; therefore, ruffians, pull away, and give her one jerk more, and then carry the cursed heretic to her dungeon." That was the old papal method of obtaining redress by "due subordination."

There is *Dinah* tied to the whipping tree, with her back torn to one condensed mass of mashed flesh and gore, almost in a state of putrescence; and close by stands the slave-driving preacher, announcing to her—"Whereas, due subordination to our *Southern domestic institutions*, requires you who are a slave to yield a present submission, and to seek redress for your undeserved castigation by such means as are in accordance with such subordination; therefore, Tom, give her *nine and thirty lashes more, well laid on;* then put on the *nigger plaster*, and drive her to work." That is the Southern *Christian's* domestic means to " seek redress in accordance with due subordination."

That preacher of the gospel who acknowledges "due subordination" to the authority of such Church Courts, as they papistically entitle themselves, not only ought to be aggrieved by their iniquitious sentence of guilt falsely pronounced, but should be made to yield both " present submission" and ceaseless servitude. If the American

churches basely admit those claims, they will speedily become no better than "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the Rabbis "who sit in Moses' seat." Away with such worship and wondering after the Beast!

ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIANS.

That was a most exemplary specimen of churchcraft, when the Rabbis of that denomination, and the "workmen of like occupation" among the Presbyterians, conspired to amalgamate the Old School, and the New School, the *puritan* school, and the Scotch school, with them of *no* school, into one Babel-like confraternity. The scheming, and the turning, and the shuffling, and the twisting on that memorable occasion will never be forgotten by some of the lookers-on in Philadelphia.

Exclusive of all the other tricks, which so long engaged the hearts, and heads, and hands of those craftsmen, the *finale* will be held in lasting remembrance. When it was ascertained that the proposition to unite the Associate Reformed Synod with the Presbyterian General Assembly would be adopted by a small majority,—I advert not to the manner in which it was then stated without denial, that some of the votes were secured,—the next grand object was this, to obtain possession of the library—about 4,200 volumes of valuable works, which John M. Mason had collected in Britian for the Theological Seminary of the Associate Reformed Presbyterians. It was confidently asserted, not denied, and generally believed by all persons who were

conversant with that subject, about fifteen years ago, and is still reiterated, that many of those books were taken away clandestinely in barrels, and baskets, and bags, and boxes, by the "friends of the union!"

As soon as the question was decided, one of the partisans, Mr. A., hastened from Philadelphia to New York, as was judicially proved, if I recollect aright, and had the remaining volumes of the library packed up, that they might be transferred with all despatch to the Theological Seminary at Princeton. Mr. F., one of the elders who opposed the discordant match, and had sternly forbidden the bans, also hurried off from the General Assembly, or the Synod, and procured an injunction from the Chancellor of New York, against the removal of the library. When the process was served, the return was this—"Non est; de bonis non."

From that period to the present time, those *loving* friends have been exactly related like the prophetical delineation of the tribes of Israel—"Ephraim envied Judah, and Judah vexed Ephraim"—*Isaiah* xi. 13; notwithstanding, as they profess, they all believe "the communion of saints." At length, the remaining 2,500 volumes which had not surreptitiously been conveyed into private libraries, have been restored to the primitive owners, by the decision of the civil tribunal.

It is very humiliating to Christians, that it should be necessary to counteract the unholy machinations of Church Courts in *our* country, by an appeal to the secular authority. That complex violation of decency and the gospel well may justify the sincere use of the humiliating

declaration and prayer of the prophet of Tzars,—*Lamentations* v. 16—18, 21,—"Wo unto us, that we have sinned! For this our heart is faint; for those things our eyes are dim. Because of the mountain of Zion which is desolate; the *foxes* walk upon it. Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned!"

REFORMED DUTCH GENERAL SYNOD.

One circumstance which occurred at a late meeting of the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church in Philadelphia, proves, that whenever the opportunity is afforded, every ecclesiastical assembly will "turn aside unto their crooked ways."

ROMISH EXORCISM.

At a prior meeting of the Synod, according to the proceedings at the time referred to, this question had been discussed—Is the popish ceremony of christening, the gospel ordinance of baptism? A report was made by the committee, to whom that matter had been referred; and that point was so extremely *knotty*, that the "dominies" would not decide, that a series of ritual buffoonery, expressly devoted, as the Romanists say, to exorcise the devil, is not symbolical of the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." They, therefore, referred the inquiry to their successors; who after a year's deliberation might fairly be supposed competent to reply determinately to that embarrassing puzzle!

When in the usual routine of the synodical proceedings, the report was introduced for deliberation, a motion was instantly made virtually to dismiss the whole subject. The only cause which was offered for that evasion, upon a grave and important practical query, was this—"That subject at the former Synod was introduced, and the report, also, was written by a *foreigner*."

"To him they agreed;" for the discussion which was designed to evince, that popish mummery is not a Christian ordinance, was rejected, with their other refuse materials.

Well—"I says, says I"—that is right comical! Here are men assembled, some of whom, to use their own discordant title, are *foreigners*. The mover of the resolution is the son of foreigners; and most of them, probably the children or grandchildren of foreigners. Within the memory of man, they imported their chief dominies from Holland. Not many years since, and the practice now is scarcely extinct, they performed all their praying, singing, preaching, and ministration of ordinances, in a foreign language. Yet they deliberately refuse to bear a new and important witness to the truth, notwithstanding the exigency of the times demands it, because one of their own brethren, who was branded as a foreigner, whether truly or not, had been appointed to present a report upon an interesting subject, which had been referred, as it appeared upon the record, by the classis of New York to their General Synod.

While I was cogitating over that perplexing matter, as I thought of the motley association of foreigners in the Re-

formed Dutch Church, the words of Daniel passed through my mind—"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

That exhibition was more anomalous and surprising, because the Reformed Dutch brotherhood formally repudiate all the morbid and Romish attributes of Church Courts; and expressly deny in theory, while they disown in practice, the cardinal principles of antichristian interference with the rights of individual Christians, and the privileges of the separate churches. To their hitherto steadfast adhesion to that fundamental mainspring of Christian fellowship, I have no doubt that they owe all their existing peace and union as a confederated body, while the other denominations are at deadly strife, and in confusion. I earnestly hope, notwithstanding an occasional effort to the contrary by some members, that they will strenuously resist every attempt to transform pacific meetings of the brethren into turbulent assemblies, where wranglers may brawl, and Rabbis contend for the preeminence.

DECISIONS OF CHURCH COURTS.

Many recent meetings of Ecclesiastical Judicatures and their collateral assemblies of conflicting partisans, have disclosed very little Christian love and truth. Notwithstanding, to incurious and unsuspecting observers of their proceedings, all may appear to be conducted with impartial gravity. If, however, a topic on which men may conscientiously differ without excitement arises for debate, and especially if it be the appeal of an injured individual

against the unhallowed exactions of the Rabbis in an "inferior judicatory;" then the prophetic departure from the faith may be discerned, and there have been sometimes heard "seducing spirits, speaking lies in hypocrisy."

Partiality and prejudice generally decide all personal controversies. The spirit of the clan never was more unequivocally exemplified by a tribe of Scottish Highlanders, than it is openly displayed in some Church Courts.

When the case of William McCalla was appointed for a hearing in the Presbyterian General Assembly of 1815, a minister of that city, who was in the secret, proclaimed, before the investigation of the cause commenced, that his appeal would be dismissed, although the synodical decision was not only self-evidently unrighteous, but in reality the appellant had never been on trial, except his claim of right could be so denominated. How could that minister declare so accurately the result? He knew Mr. McCalla's real offence was this, that he was too unruly to be a "*Jack*" for some of the Kentucky Rabbis. He also understood the nature of the questions which were intermingled with the appeal, the party-politics, and the conformity to the world, which were to be discussed—and from the list of members he at once perceived, as is always the case in every Church Court upon all grand moral decisive questions, that the majority would determine contrary to rectitude.

It was not less openly said at the commencement of the Assembly in 1817, that George Bourne would be released from the fangs of the menstealers—while in the year 1818, it was just as positively affirmed, before the same case was called, that he would be maltreated. Why were those

results, with many others which could be cited, of a general, as well as of a personal character, so exactly anticipated? Because, by the catalogue of members in 1817, it was known, that there was a large preponderance of independent, conscientious, and intelligent brethren, who could not be befooled—and because that infamous Assembly of 1818 was impelled by a horde of "stealers of men," and some dough-faced Rabbis, who for the sake of *their* churchcraft, consented with those "sinners of the first rank, who are guilty of the highest kind of theft."—*Presbyterian Confession of Faith, Larger Catechism.* Question 142.

Those Church Courts which during fifty years past have constantly been sustaining slavery, by winking at its existence, and by palliating its enormities, are the grand criminal accomplices of the menstealers. They have tacitly approved, and have actually pronounced to be a "part and parcel" of American Christianity, an iniquitous system, which simultaneously violates the whole decalogue.

Slavery is equally impious towards God, and a curse to man. The impiety, profaneness, and Sabbath-breaking which it ever instigates, are only paralleled by its disruption of the marriage covenant and all the bonds of domestic relationship; by its ceaseless tortures and destruction of human life; by its complicated and dreadful uncleanness; by its theft, robbery, kidnapping, and piracy; by its falsehood and perjury; and by its insatiable covetousness. By admitting slave-drivers into their communion as Christians, they have directly proclaimed that all the multifarious tur-

pitude of slavery is consistent with the moral law of God as expounced by Christ and his apostles. Therefore, upon them rests all the past guilt, and all the existing evils, and all the prospective curse of that appalling ungodliness.

The remark of Bishop Hall respecting the "hardened and aggravated depravity" of the Benjamites in defending the men of Gibeah after their abominable murder of the Levite's wife, may justly be applied to those American Church Courts who have held "fellowship with the throne of iniquity which frameth mischief by a law." "Instead of punishing the sin, they patronise the actors, and will rather die in resisting justice, than live and prosper in furthering it! The abetting of evil is worse than the commission; this may be an infirmity, but that must be on resolution. Easy punishment is too much favor to sin—connivance is much worse—but the defence of it, and that unto blood, is intolerable."

That result has been displayed. The concave of heaven peals with the startling address—"*The voice of your brother Lovejoy's blood cries to me from the ground*" *of those Church Courts*, who practically maintain that the ceaseless nefarious crimes inseparable from slavery are "Bible doctrine that will stand;" and that burglary, arson, and murder are essential to the prosperity of "the church!" It is true, those Ecclesiastical Judicatures have not enacted in so many words that proposition; but they have really carried it out in practice for fifty years; until they dare not now attempt to resist the Delilah who bewitches, and the Moloch who intimidates them.

What are the consequences of that corrupt partiality, and of that unrighteous prejudice which notoriously sway all Church Courts? The contempt, or disregard, or extinction of all evangelical order in administering the discipline of the gospel of Christ. Statements which certain men who fill "the chief seats in the synagogues" disseminate, and which formerly would have been received as oracular, now are rejected as only the effusions of irritated pride, or of unprovoked malevolence. Church censures, that once were dreaded as the greatest evil which a conscientious Christian could realize, in all ordinary cases, and especially if connected with disputations originating in the various efforts to produce a moral reform, in any of its more exciting departments, now are justly considered as the mere offspring of malignant duplicity; and, therefore, are generally decried and uprightly contemned. What has produced that most pernicious effect which has paralyzed all Christian discipline, and which also has broken down the barrier that should sever the church from the world? The only true answer is this: It is churchcraft—or in other words, it is the antichristian proceedings of Ecclesiastical Judicatures.

It requires indeed very little evangelical perspicacity to recognise the predominance in Church Courts of that "spirit of antichrist" which the Apostle John portrays—that unholy system which amalgamates the contest for preeminence, "Jesuit juggling," "the love of the world," and a rancorous opposition to every measure and person who would establish the gospel as the sole directory of faith and manners, and who would banish from the king-

dom of God, all that is derogatory to the gracious Redeemer's supremacy, and incompatible with the force of truth, the prevalence of holiness, and the love of the brethren.

Men who profess that they have received the Holy Ghost, deliberately publish to the world a system of theology, which they call "Articles of Religion," or a "Confession of Faith," that none may mistake or be deceived. They subjoin a lengthened series of minute illustrations of their design, that all persons who desire to belong to their consociation, may clearly discern the precise obligations which will devolve upon them, if they assume that relationship. Notwithstanding, they sanction the practical abrogation, and it has often been developed, and the theoretical contradiction also of their own avowed dogmas, with the constant erasure or contempt, and the habitual infraction of their own general rules of government and discipline. To which they add, whenever the "spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience" prompts them, the effusion of the most virulent calumny upon every person who conscientiously believes his own creed of faith, and who is anxious that the regulations which are obligatory upon all the consociated community should reciprocally and steadfastly be enforced, or by general consent be openly annulled.

That is old fashioned Roman churchcraft in perfection, under a modern name, only divested of its naked and most fearful hideousness. It is that identical offspring of "the Beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit," which first rescinded Sigismund's imperial safe conduct, and

then burnt John Huss and Jerome of Prague. To appropriate the Lord's emphatic description, it is that kind of devil which "goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

From present appearances, some of the Church Courts will soon unavoidably disband, or they must be regenerated, by casting out "the image of the Beast." It is probable, that ere long the New England Methodists will obtain from their Lord, in answer to prayer, that precious boon, the transfer of their adversary to the herd of swine. Pray on, brethren! always pray! Faint not, and "continue in prayer!" God will avenge his own servants who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with you. *Luke* xviii. 7. Seize that enemy and slayer of Christian pilgrims, *churchcraft!* Trample under your feet, prelatical usurpations! "Win and conquer, never cease!" until you have ejected the power of "the Beast," the snares of the "False Prophet," and the temporizing sway of the world. Persevere all of you, followers of Jesus, of every name, until you have taught the Rabbis, to become as "little children,"—to exchange churchcraft for church fellowship,—to abandon the usurpations of "Ecclesiastical Judicatures," for evangelical government and gospel discipline,—and to esteem "the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt."

IV.—MISCHIEFS OF CHURCH COURTS.

RABBI ALEXANDER, THE COPPERSMITH, DOING MUCH EVIL.

THE spirit of the world is so closely incorporated with the objects, management, and effects of "Ecclesiastical Judicatures," that pernicious consequences unavoidably must result from the perpetuation of any system, in which "the spirit of antichrist" essentially predominates. To promote true religion and the prosperity of the church of Christ, never has been any part of the design for which "councils" assembled.

"Church Courts," as the term itself implies, necessarily involve a usurpation of divine authority. They differ in degrees of impious despotism, but not in the fact of the actual transgression; for in every claim and exercise of unlawful jurisdiction, there invariably must be an abuse of power. All civil tyrannies prove it; but as the crime is more heinous, so the results, in their spiritual relations, are more pestiferous.

Remember the last Methodist Conference at Cincinnati. What can be a more outrageously antichristian assumption, than that which they arrogated, when they attempted to prohibit their brethren Scott and Storrs from attending a public meeting to which they were invited, and from taking part in its proceedings?

The business to be transacted, or the object of the meeting, is non-essential. It is the muzzling power which was asserted,—to chain ministers by the leg, and to gag their mouths from prayer, and from proclaiming gospel truth, because that truth will disturb and frighten obdurate sinners,—against which we loudly protest.

Much of the "vain jangling" that is displayed in ecclesiastical assemblies, is inseparable from those "foolish and unlearned questions, whereof come envy, railings, evil surmisings, and perverse disputings of men destitute of the truth," that are constantly introduced for discussion. Many of those "strifes of words" are a contention for forms and ceremonies, with which the "power of godliness" is little more connected, than the war-whoop of an Indian is like "David's sweet harp of solemn sound." Of that fact we need no other proof, than a recurrence to the cases of George Duffield and Albert Barnes. Whatever was the *real topic* of disputation, or whatever was the *actual meaning* of the litigants, no Christian who reads their speeches, as published by themselves, can evade the deduction, that some of the debaters violated John Witherspoon's rhetorical rules: "Never begin to speak, till you have something to say," and "Leave off when you have done." I "guess" if that old Scottish *foreigner* had been present at some meetings within the last few years, and had been empowered to enforce his own "twa short rules of rhetoric," many brawlers who had nothing to say, or who talked only nonsense, would have been commanded to keep their

seats; and numberless long-winded "pratings of malicious words," full of fury, and fight, and foolery, would have been corked down in their owner, to find vent in some other place and form. How sternly would the author of the "Ecclesiastical Characteristics" have snubbed Diotrephes, and silenced Demetrius, and scowled upon Tertullus, and chastised Alexander!

LAWYERS IN CHURCH COURTS.

If any subject demands the serious attention of Christians, it is this:—*the election of lawyers to offices in the churches.*

Without doubt, much of the corruption now existing in Church Courts arises from the admission of lawyers into them. Men who long have practised wrangling, the browbeating of witnesses, the mystifying of self-evident truths, and the twisting of positive facts into a perfectly contrary meaning, expressly to contradict their fellow craftsmen, and who torture all their ingenuity, to condemn the innocent, and to clear the guilty; and who engage in all that course of chicanery more pertinaciously, according to the remuneration which they receive—those men may be reformed, but to apply the old quaint proverb—"*It is difficult to teach an old dog new tricks!*"—*Luke* xi. 45, 46, 52.

A pious young man recently informed me, that after he had pursued his studies during some months, with an attorney of New York, who is an officer of a church, he abandoned his course, with an unconquerable abhorrence of that profession. "I saw," said my friend, "such

scandalous knavery, and heard such shameless falsehoods, no better than subornation of perjury, that my whole soul repelled the awful delusion, that a man whose occupation is continual ungodliness, should pretend to any religion at all; and much less, that he should be a very influential member in the church, and in Ecclesiastical Judicatures."

Upon one occasion, after having heard an incomprehensible harangue, I remarked to another listener, "If that last speaker was not manifestly a preacher, I should have supposed that he was a lawyer earning his fee."

"That is just it," said my neighbor, "he was considered a smart lawyer some time ago, till he took it into his head to turn preacher; but he cannot quit his old trade."

The churches must adopt the rule, that lawyers shall not fill offices among them. To delegate an attorney to an "Ecclesiastical Judicature," and then expect social harmony, is ineffably preposterous.

From that anti-evangelical source, doubtless, proceed those hair-splitting contentions; that cold-blooded, killing reproach; the commixture of truth and error with good and evil, until no person can separate the venomous compound; and that "all deceivableness of unrighteousness," which so often have proved that many modern protestant Church Courts are genuine Dominican iniquisitions, and conclaves of Jesuitism.

Much of the disputation in Church Courts is expended upon subjects that the Rabbis introduce, for no other purpose than to perplex the strangers, who attend with a single eye to the glory of God, and with no other intention than to do good. When the business, as it is called, is

actually commenced, the uninitiated find themselves in an arena of *wordy* gladiators, in which scarcely any thing is evident but the fact, that nearly the whole scene is a labyrinth of mystification, verbiage, and sophistry.

Another portion of the conflicting show, is almost a skirmish for antiquated and perplexing forms, in which the turbulent and disorderly altercation for "order! order! order! question! question! question!" is an edifying comment upon the origin, operations, and abuses of churchcraft, and the corruption of "Church Courts."

Often have I been reminded of the truth of a remark which was made by a judge of one of the Philadelphia Courts; and of a similar opinion expressed by two gentlemen of Pennsylvania. I refer to the year 1814, and to the case of the Pine street Presbyterian church, which then excited such deep interest. They declared, that they did not believe a jury of twelve decent men, from any class of society in Philadelphia, could have been gathered together, who could have been induced to return a verdict equally corrupt, as the Presbyterian General Assembly of that year decided.

That opinion is confirmed by the recent declaration of an enlightened Presbyterian elder of New York, who, for many years past, has almost always been a member of "Ecclesiastical Judicatures." He averred—"I am convinced, that is quite time for every Christian society to cast off the yoke, and become independent of all "Church Courts." I never attend one of those meetings, without being astonished at the manifest change which that un-

holy atmosphere appears to produce upon the judgments and hearts of most of the ministers."

The very terms, "Church Court, Ecclesiastical Judicature, Court of Jesus Christ, and Court of the Lord's House," are branded with "the mark of the Beast," and the stench and "smoke of the bottomless pit" surrounds them. Circumstances render the inscription of satan upon them more or less visible. The noisome exhalations from them differ in degrees of venom and putrescence; but they all embody a deleterious portion of that churchcraft, which they have clandestinely pilfered from "the mystery of iniquity" in the vatican. As they were unknown in that early period of the church when "great grace was upon them all," so they will be equally banished from the millennial kingdom of Christ, for they all will be consumed in the same burning with the popish procession of Corpus Christi, and the Jesuit-holds of every foul spirit, and the Ursuline nunnery cages of unclean and hateful birds, and "the Beast, and the False Prophet."

In the New Testament, councils of priests and scribes, and "Sanhedrims," with all similar consociated craftsmen, are never mentioned without condemnation, either clearly implied or expressed. They are always represented as the incurable "enemies of the cross of Christ," and tormentors of his people—as obdurate, incorrigible, and fiend-like persecutors, who "make war with the Lamb." The Lord Jesus Christ, with the strongest emphasis, in a great diversity of forms, and by very affecting examples, derived from tyrannical rulers and little children, and

especially by his own illustrative act,—*Immanuel washing the feet of his disciples*,—has most authoritatively condemned all priestly haughtiness, and the arrogance and wickedness of "Church Courts," with their Babylonian spirit and practices.

The history of all those impious excrescences, which through the mystery of iniquity, have been engrafted upon the primitive churches, demonstrates that any good to be derived from them is visionary; while their curse is certain and perennial. Ecclesiastical records, and the civil annals of the European nations, during one thousand years, are scarcely nothing more than details of the abominations elicited by Church Courts.

In those assemblies, if we may judge according to the Lord's rule, "by their fruits ye shall know them," there is a steadfast determination on the part of the Rabbis to impel every measure, if possible, according to the course which will most efficiently consolidate their own power.

The forms are very imposing. There are singing and prayer, and a sermon, at the commencement. So there were at popish councils! The cardinal legate, *in pontificalibus*, with his deputies, mumbled over the Litany of the Mass, and of their Lady, the Queen of Heaven and Mother of God." They chaunted the Veni Spiritus. Amid purple and scarlet, like their transcripts, some of our modern pulpits, a pompously adorned Babylonian mummer pronounced a magniloquent harangue, and then the idolaters rose up "to eat, and drink, and play." To the looker-on, the external was fascinating. But if one sincere perspicacious Christian saw the interior, to him the

whole head must have appeared sick, and the whole heart faint. "From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." Devotional forms at "Church Courts," it is to be feared, *sometimes*, are little superior to a Laodicean ceremonial, which is divested of those cardinal attributes that render prayer, praise, and preaching beneficial to man and acceptable to God.

Unholy tempers and malignant dispositions are inherent in "Ecclesiastical Judicatures." Preachers are so used to talk in the pulpit without contradiction, that some of them deem themselves almost oracles; and are therefore disconcerted when they enter an assembly of an hundred dogmatists, who, it is manifest, instead of listening and learning, like the Jewish "chief priests and the scribes," prefer to cavil and thunder.

Church Courts seldom discuss directly those evangelical concerns which include the prosperity of the Lord's household, or the most efficient methods to obtain the answer to those sublime petitions—"Thy kingdom come!—Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!" When those holy topics are introduced, they are merely themes through which the churchcraft can be sustained. The education of youth for ministerial usefulness, and institutions formed to disseminate the gospel, dwindle into schemes of personal aggrandizement, and the prolonged extension of executive power. That eloquence which might melt obduracy, and arouse them who are "dead in trespasses and sins," and urge onward the slothful, is wasted in heart-rending squabbles, and "strife among the

workmen of like occupation, which of them shall be accounted the greatest."

The Apostle John, in his visions at Patmos, saw the "Beast rise up out of the sea;" so churchcraft and its mischiefs flow from the contentions and commotions of "Ecclesiastical Judicatures." Bring into discussion the dogmas of the Old School, or of the New School, or of the abolitionists, or of the pro-slavery men, or of the go-betweens, or of the everything-arians, and nothing-arians, or of the Christian school; and haughtiness, malignity, ambition and "cunning craftiness" are soon unfolded. You may hear Diotrephes "prating his malicious words." You can see Demetrius contriving the machinery to enlarge and strengthen the selfish craft. You will be stunned with the noise and fictions of some Turtullus; for whose impostures, that fox-like imp of the Beast of blasphemy and the Mother of Harlots, called *Common Fame*, which is the cherished myrmidon of all inquisitors, always stands ready with his perjuries to vouch. You may also behold Alexander, in his Babylonish smithery, working away, and doing much evil. The intelligent, humble, and upright members are ashamed and brow-beaten by the hypocritical confederates, who care not how the mischief is wrought, provided they obtain and secure the ascendency. Thus honest and conscientious Christians, who truly desire to act in "the fear of God," are cast down; while they who "speak loftily, in great power spread themselves like a green bay-tree."

Nothing is more extraordinay to a single-hearted Christian than to watch the complex movements of Ecclesiasti-

cal Judicatures. To them it is truly surprising, that the controvertists in those assemblies do not appeal to the Old and New Testaments for a sanction to their "judicial procedures," except to pervert their meaning into an authority for that corruption which they plainly condemn. It is not uncommon for four, seven, or ten litigants to take up their own Constitution, and for every one of them to give it a different sense, and all of them a meaning contrary to its obvious design. If there were no other cause, the banishment from Church Courts of the Bible as the only authoritative standard and directory, is fully sufficient to insure that *Ichabod* will be written on the canopy over their heads, in their halls of discord and malevolence.

If a minister sincerely addresses a Church Court in the spirit and style of the gospel, he will probably receive a retort after the example of that Christian-killing prelate, Gardiner.

A lowly disciple named Ralph Hare, was taken before that sanguinary persecutor, and was charged with heresy. Hare denied the allegation, and meekly answered—"I seek and daily pray to God, that I may know the truth, and I trust the Lord will preserve me from error."

Gardiner, who was a Rabbi of the genuine breed, replied: "I perceive thou art a naughty fellow."

"Alas!" said Hare—"what evil did I speak?"

"By Saint Mary," answered the profane popish inquisitor, "you said *the Lord, the Lord;* and to speak of the Lord, is *symbolum hereticorum: the sign of heretics!* Thou must turn or burn, thou naughty fellow!"

In the same manner, if "a follower of Paul the aged"

talks about praying to God, that he may be preserved from the galling yoke of Church Courts and their crushing burdens, he exhibits *symbolum hereticorum!* All the curses of Ernulphus will be poured upon his head for daring to dispute their infallibility of judgment, and their supremacy in jurisdiction, or, as the Associate Presbytery of Albany announce their claim, because he "manifests a want of respect and obedience to the courts of Christ's house, and treats the decisions of" *antichristian* "Judicatures and Ecclesiastical Courts not only with neglect, but also with open contempt." Ergo, as their renowned prototype, Gardiner, adjudged, "*the naughty fellows must turn or burn.*"

COMMON FAME.

One of the most abominable and mischievous practices which modern "*Church Courts*" have stolen from the popish inquisitors, and which demonstrates incontestably that they are the strong castle of unrighteousness, and of the minor "mystery of iniquity," is this—their nefarious system of vilifying, criminating, and butchering an obnoxious individual by means, and under the name and shield of that notorious imp of darkness, *Common Fame!*

Among all the "strong delusions and the working of satan," which protestants have pilfered from "the scarlot colored Beast, and the great whore who is drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus," there is no other "prating with malicious words" so execrable. It is the nefarious and sanguinary impulse of the grand malicious adversary of mankind in

all its atrocity, and without even the hypocritical endeavor at concealment. The only subject of marvel, is this—from what motives any sons of the Reformation could have adopted so nefarious a scheme; and by what chicanery protestants can have been induced to submit to that genuine inquisitorial process?

Nothing is more easy than for an envious, crafty man to disseminate effectually and yet so slily, as ever to remain undiscovered, the most mendacious and deadly reproach of one whom, as a supposed obstacle to his advantage and popularity, he would remove out of his way. He can loosen a hundred tongues, while neither of the second hand calumniators may be conscious of the prompter, or of the manœuvre, by which the retailer of the slander is unintentionally transformed into a partisan foe, a man who has never injured him, and whom he may still fancy that he esteems. In reference to an open-hearted minister of the gospel, especially, those sluices of reproach may be unclosed, until prejudice, passion, social attachments, and above all, hatred of a preacher's opposition to sin and faithful rebukes of the delinquent, will embody a combination of backbiters, who will of course become witnesses, and who will *vociferously* attest to circumstances to which nothing but infantile credulity and irreligious aversion would even for one moment listen. All which, it is also very probable, every member of the Church Court, before whom the preposterous and contradictory details at last are formally recited, is convinced must be a base and malignant fiction. Those Jewish predecessors of modern Ecclesiastical Judicatures who

strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel, were exactly copied in that respect by the Dominican inquisitors; and some protestants, unless their proceedings are completely falsified by themselves, have emulated their astounding and deceitful gullibility.

That Sanhedrim who sought for testimony, however much it was at variance with itself, and with truth, and decorum, to convict the Lord Christ and his apostles, have been followed exactly by the papal inquisitions and their Jesuistical familiars, in their modes to insnare and condemn the innocent. Alas! the reformed Church Courts have often evinced, that the same spirit from the "prince of the power of the air" now worketh in other children of disobedience, than the myrmidons of the hierarchical court of Rome. Of that accursed Babylonian process, the principal characters were these—cupidity of wealth, enmity to truth, resolute injustice, and inexorable cruelty, all cemented by unrelenting perseverance.

The instruments were these—secret treachery, artful intrigues, unknown complainants, and torture to extort the confession of guilt in the person who was appointed to be plundered and starved to death in that terrestrial purgatory, "the dungeons of the *holy* office," or to be roasted at their infernal auto de fe. There is scarcely a contested process of common fame upon record, in which those horrors under different modifications have not been exhibited. The complaining traitor is unknown. The two-faced plotters are masked. The wily conspirators probably remain even unsuspected. The robbers of a man's reputation and means of subsistence, and the tor-

mentors of his mind, heart, conscience, and family, watch all the "judicial procedures" with similar complacency to "the way of an adulterous woman," who is described by Agur, *Proverbs* xxx. 20—"She eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness." They laugh at the credulous disciples whom they deceive; and equally marvel and exult at their own adroit wiles, and the success of their subtil manœuvres.

The relation in which the accused stands to the Babylonian Church Court is this. They are prosecutors, witnesses, jury, and judges; but they cunningly enforce princes to become the executioners of the miserable victims. With the exception of actual incarceration of the person, and open confiscation of property, and the combustibles and smoke of the auto da fe, such are precisely the beginning, the middle, and the end of that modern religious persecution which is commenced in the name of our ecclesiastical "Judge Lynch," and which is carried on by the authority of that lawless tribunal, the inquisition; and which is consolidated by the lying testimony of that houseless "fugitive and vagabond," *Common Fame;* and which is consummated in all its horrible atrocities under the jurisdiction of the "Beast that ascended out of the bottomless pit, and shall go into perdition."

A reference to the Romish "directory for inquisitors" proves, that in all substantial points, the rules of modern Church Courts have been extracted from the papal bulls and decretals against the Christians who are "suspected of heretical pravity." As that afflictive subject is not comprehended even by the members of the churches who are

most interested, the nature of a process upon *Common Fame* shall be detailed.

It would be useless to unfold those *mock trials*, in which, from the first thought to the last word, the whole transaction was avowedly undertaken, under pretended ecclesiastical forms, to crush a staunch disciple of Christ, who had too much conscience to bow "the knees unto Baal:"—but three investigations shall be unveiled, as they were communicated by eye witnesses of the transactions. It is proper also to remark, that the cases occurred in distant parts of our country, among persons of different denominations, and at intervals of several years between each affair. To evince that the system itself is totally corrupt and incurable, it may be subjoined, that none of the craftsmen ever had any intercourse with each other, probably never saw any member of the Ecclesiastical Judicature who was not of their own sect, and most assuredly never heard of the other "judicial procedures."

The charge against all the three ministers implicated, was this—criminal and indecorous behaviour to women in their congregations; and to render the cases more exact, the female in each case was a member of the society in full communion. In two of the affairs, there was ample proof that the prime instigators of the uproar were neighboring preachers, and that their object was nearly the same, to procure the removal of the two ministers, that a pastoral vacancy might be made for a friend. The termination of both those cases was identical. The churches were deprived of their ministers, whose characters were seriously injured. The partisans of the then unsuspected

conspirators succeeded to the official stations in the churches, whose deadly wound was not healed. Both those ministers were finally absolved from the charge, there being no valid evidence which could be adduced against them.

But in this two-tongued world, "facing-both-ways," after the example of the primitive crusaders against heresy, some modern Church Courts have sanctioned the deceitfulness of their own familiars, and dispensed with the irregularities of their own brotherhood. A direct complaint for the violation of the moral law was made against a preacher by the members of his own congregation. A committee of the ecclesiastical body was appointed to explore all the facts. Having made all the necessary arrangements with the alleged delinquent, they set apart a time to meet the complainants, and to hear their evidence.

The first witnesses who were called upon were ridiculed; then puzzled with captious questions; next insnared into apparent contradictions; afterwards refused all opportunity of explaining themselves; then entangled in admissions which were construed as so entirely favorable to the preacher, as to invalidate their other statements; and finally so insulted by the "judicial committee," and their brother minister, that some of the cited parties left the meeting. Others refused to give their testimony because they could not be secured from a repetition of the gross indecorum into which the prior witnesses had been intrapped. At last, all of them openly protested against the competency of a committee who had evidently determined to banish impartial evidence; to pervert and conceal

the truth; to irritate the feelings of the injured; and to terminate all inquiry respecting the only subject of dissatisfaction. The consequence was this—the committee reported, that the minister was innocent, because there was no sufficient evidence, as the persons who alleged the improprieties against him were altogether unworthy of belief. Thus that case was dismissed, and the outraged brethren were obliged to submit to their unjust censure and unmerited reproach.

In one of the other cases already specified, the person who either directly inspired, or who secretly excited those falsifying trumpet-tongues of Common Fame, himself introduced the subject before the Church Court, with the necessary *cant* respecting the honor of religion; the general remarks upon the *notoriously* criminal conduct; the importance of examining the case to sustain the "character and dignity" of the church; and his deep concern for his lamented brother's alleged turpitude!—with other subtilty which is purloined from the hall of the inquisition.

After the customary forms, to impress the laymen with a conviction that every thing is done with impartial gravity, the complainant and some subordinate, who will say "*ditto*" to every thing which the Rabbi will announce and execute, are appointed a committee of *spies* to go about from house to house throughout the congregation, and to make inquiries.

During their progress by artful insinuations, by sly inuendos, by inveigling questions, and by proposing "matters of doubtful disputation" among the members, before they have half finished their intended hypocritical

search, the congregation are in an ungodly uproar of malicious "hard speeches." While the minister himself is probably almost the only person who is not apprized of the mischief; all of his friends, from different causes, being shut up in silence. As the preacher is absent from the conclave where the business first is discussed under the engagement of secrecy,—for the Judas, who conceals himself under the vizor and behind the ignis fatuus imagery of common fame, would not dare to utter his calumnious falsehoods in the presence of the injured—he may thus know nothing of the dastardly unchristian plot, until the indictment from the clerk of the Church Court is formally delivered to him.

No allegations against a minister of the gospel can be presented with so much facility, as those concerning the transgressions of the seventh commandment.

In ordinary cases, they are fatal to his usefulness, if not to his reputation. No acts are more difficult to be disproved; because they are generally stated so indeterminately, as to preclude the establishment of the negative. Besides which, there is no charge against a preacher which admits of witnesses being so easily deluded by the "cunning craftiness" of Jesuits "who lie in wait to deceive, while they are on the prowl, employed on their visitation of slander. In numberless instances, the fact alone, that a committee are exploring the certainty of a minister's indecent behaviour toward women will metamorphose "the shadow of a shade" into a visible substantial reality; and in the estimate of weak, credulous and suspicious persons, will transform purity into indecorum, the

most virtuous social intercourse into sinful familiarity, and Christian courtesy into the wantonness of a libertine.

In one of the cases now cited, it is averred, that not only were the accusations dismissed, because they were not sustained by the evidence, but some of the witnesses solemnly attested upon oath, that they neither had given the committee of inquiry the information which had been presented in their name, nor had they ever heard of it, before they received the notice to attend upon the trial. The primary, probably the sole object of the secret cabal, however, had been obtained; for the ministers retired from their stations, and the persons who had been previously designated obtained a settlement.

It is also not a little remarkable, because the actors themselves seem to be altogether not less unconscious of the startling fact, than the Dominican Jesuit inquisitors are of the apocalyptic prophecies which promulge those "judicial procedures," that upon occasions of that kind, trials which are originated by the infamous clamor of *Common Fame;* Church Courts always exemplify the genuine attributes of the Beast which the Apostle John saw in Patmos, as he is described in Revelation. The "Ecclesiastical Judicatory or Court," as the Associate Presbytery of Albany denominate that antichristian thing, are like a leopard in their swiftness to do mischief, a bear in their tenacity to execute their odious and cruel purpose, and a lion in their greediness to devour their prey—commingling also "the two horns like a lamb" with its *bleating* while they "speak as a dragon."

There seems to be a resolute determination to accomplish their design, as if the lordship which they exercise "over God's heritage," and the pride and character, even the prolonged resistance of their ecclesiastical system, depended on their obstinacy to verify the accusation, and to crush their opponent, by the proof of guilt and the sentence of condemnation.

Examine the record of their "judicial procedures;" and however barefaced may be the iniquity, as it is detailed by themselves, and with all the artifices by which they conceal the truth in the case, after having obliterated its prominent features, still enough of the arcana is discernible to render the monster's ugliness shocking to the moral sense: for "Common Fame" stands before you in all the naked deformity of an incorrigibly wilful slanderer, and some protestant Church Courts, in that department often seem to be directly guilty of subornation of perjury; and are therefore more justly condemned than their progenitor, and their elder craftsmen of Portugal and Spain.

A grand moral battle may be anticipated upon the subject of that "*wolf in sheep's clothing*," Common Fame. The permission, or rather the invitation which Church Courts have given that *Cainite* to take up his permanent residence in the fold of Christ, must be rescinded. Some minister of the gospel, it is to be feared, has yet to "resist unto blood, striving against sin," in the religious conflict with Common Fame and the Protestant inquisition, of which that demon fox is the cardinal prop and machinist. Should some humble, innocent follower of the Lamb be arraigned by that "sorcerer, who is a child of the devil,

and full of all subtilty and mischief," his course will be this—boldly to deny all the jurisdiction which is claimed upon the process of common fame; and to trample with evangelical abhorrence upon all the antichristian doings of Tertullus and the craftsmen who employ him. If the victim is pronounced contumacious, he must persevere to the last resort; and if it shall be found, according to general custom, that he cannot realize equity in an Ecclesiastical Judicature upon earth, then let him copy the magnanimous example of that immortal protestant, the undaunted Martin Luther, publicly burn the unrighteous anathematizing *decretal*, and the contemptible *bull* of their infuriated malignity, and appeal from the curse of Babylon on earth, to the plaudit of "the Son of Man upon the throne of his glory."

A preacher whose whole life was devoted to the submission of antichristian lordship furnishes the ensuing paragraph as a peroration. "Churchcraft is a burden grievous to be borne. In your Courts, O Rabbis, you reign like lions in their dens, and tear to pieces all who have the misfortune to fall under your power. Your Church Courts resemble the fabled castles of the giants, where nothing is to be seen but the spoils of the victims devoured by your merciless hands. Wo to the man who enters within your priestly dominion! You know this; for your consciences have told it you a thousand times; but dignity, power, and wealth render you callous to all conviction. May God pardon all your sins for Christ's sake!—Amen."

POSTSCRIPT.

The preceding discussion is so liable to misconstruction, that it is proper to anticipate the wrathful denunciations of the craftsmen, which have always followed every attempt to expose the corruption of "Ecclesiastical Judicatures."

The Jewish Sanhedrim and Council reviled Peter and John, and murdered Stephen. Demetrius and the shrine makers assailed Paul. Diotrephes "prated malicious words" against John. The Council of Constance burnt John Huss and Jerome of Prague, not because they rejected the idolatry of the mass, but because they would not submit to the Beast's "power, and seat, and great authority."

Luther, Zuingle, Calvin, Latimer, Ridley, Wishart, Cranmer, and Knox, with all the brilliant constellation of martyrs and confessors of the sixteenth century, and every other witness who has prophesied in sackcloth, were not "all the day long as sheep for the slaughter," racked, butchered, or burned, because they did not believe that a wooden image is "the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity," but because they would not "crouch down as a strong ass, bow their shoulders to bear, and become servants to tribute."

The Methodist brethren, Scott, Storrs, and Sunderland, with their associates are not vilified, because they preach the doctrines of their own articles; but because they are such "fanatics," that, like Peter and John, they think it

is "right in the sight of God to hearken unto God more than unto a Methodist General Conference propelled furiously by preaching slave-drivers; and, therefore, "they cannot but speak the things which they have seen and heard."

The four denounced Presbyterian Synods have not been "put out of the synagogue," as far as the Presbyterian "rulers, and elders, and scribes, and their kindred "can thrust them, because they do not acknowledge as infallible every jot and tittle of the "Act and Testimony," and of its various discordant expositions by the contradictory commentators, or because of their congregational predilections, or because of any alleged irregularities at protracted meetings. We all know *that pretext is a mere sham!* The real causes are these. Many of those churches transfer their donations to the American Board of Foreign Missions, and to the Home Missionary Society, because they have more confidence in the usefulness of those institutions than in Rabbis Demetrius and Turtullus, and do not "yield a present submission and due subordination to the authority of Church Courts." Others of them are "under sentence of guilt," as "incendiary fanatics" who pray for the conversion of *Christian kidnappers*, and for the abolition of manstealing. Some of them will not swallow "the whole hog" of churchcraft, which, like its ancient "*brotherhood*," the herd of two thousand swine in the country of the Gergesenes, they cannot catch, while it is running "violently down a steep place into the sea." And all of them "feel themselves aggrieved by the said sentence of guilt, and seek redress by such means as are in accordance"

with the gospel, and will doubtless obtain it, by divine aid, in spite of all those scribes and Pharisees who shut up the kingdom of heaven against men." *Matt.* xxiii. 13.

Faithful Christians have ever been persecuted for their steadfastness, and for abounding in the work of the Lord: and whether we advert to the ancients or the moderns, fidelity in the service of their Lord and Master has always been stigmatized by some opprobrious epithet; and the indomitable "defenders of the faith" ever have been denounced as obstinate and fool-hardy wretches, who justly merited the anguish which they incurred, and the tortures or death to which they were doomed by the ungodly world, and by "false brethren."

Doubtless when "Nebuchadnezzar, full of rage and fury," from his imperial throne "commanded the most mighty men in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace," because they would not "serve his gods, nor worship the golden image which he had set up;" then "the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces," eulogized the wrathful, impious despot, and reviled those stubborn children of Judah. Realize that splendid scene! There sits the monarch exalted in pompous magnificence. There is the machinery to roast and consume the servants of God. And there are the three bound sons of the prophets. Once more, look! and there they walk unsinged in the spacious flames, accompanied by the Son of God, their Shepherd and their Shield! Immanuel thus assured his faithful servants in every after

age, that "when they walk through the fire they shall not be burned;" or in the spiritual meaning of the promise, as was often experienced by those who were roasted to death by the Beast and his servants, that they should not feel the conflagration.

"The presidents and princes" who "could find none occasion, nor error, nor fault in Daniel, except concerning the law of his God," when they had ensnared the thoughtless Darius, and his devout premier in their satanic trap, hypocritically pretended to bewail his rebellious temper towards the king's decree; and the dreadful catastrophe which his fanaticism and opposition to their brotherhood had naturally insured to him. Little did they anticipate the personal experience of the law of equal retribution. Less did they conceive that he who had provided that "upon the bodies of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the fire should have no power," would also "shut the lions' mouths." Those immortalized "servants of the living God" were not devoured by the flames and the lions, but all that is fearful in anticipation, and repulsive to humanity, and agonizing to sense, must have been realized, except as it was eradicated by divine mercy.

The Apostle Paul compared the power of Nero to "the mouth of a lion." Nevertheless, he presents to us a spectacle of moral grandeur and religious magnanimity, which transcends all description. There sits the imperial buffoon, luxuriating and fiddling amid the living Christians besmeared with combustibles, who were suspended to burn as torches for the illumination of his garden of voluptuousness. Beside him stands his ruffian lictor, with

his scourges and his sword, ready to execute his nod. Near him, in chains, is "Paul the aged, a prisoner of Jesus Christ." Hear his last words! They are apostolical music to all his followers, who will not obsequiously bow down and worship that image of the Beast, a Church Court. Thus he warbled forth his dying, heaven-inspired chaunt:—"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

There, in all its sublime and most impressive attributes, appears personified "the spirit of glory and of God," which rests upon them who "suffer and are reproached for the name of Christ." It is the same invincible fortitude which in every age and country, where the war has been carried on against "the dragon and his angels," has characterized the good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Whether under the tyranny of imperial, heathen Rome,—or among the ravages of that eastern Abaddon, the impostor Mohammed,—or in the midst of the unceasing massacres of the crusading descendants of the harlot "woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus,"—or encircled with stripes, confiscation, penury, and a prison,—or scorn and banishment by Church Courts,—faithful Christians have exhibited the same inflexible moral courage, and the same persevering steadfastness to their supreme Master's law and cause.—"In honor and dishonor; by evil report and good report; though buffetted, and having no certain dwelling place, and made as the filth of the earth and the offscouring of

all things, and troubled on every side, and perplexed, yet they are not in despair. They are persecuted, but not forsaken ; and cast down, but not destroyed."

That *truth* which they all believed and proclaimed survives them, for it is immortal. Their *obedience* to their Prophet and Legislator, Jesus Christ, is emblazoned in deathless records. Their *fortitude* in peril will be remembered as long as Christian annals shall perpetuate their hallowed memorial. Their *obedience* in "holding forth the word of life," and in confessing the Redeemer before men, is their living epitaph, for "their works do follow them." All are left to us an "example, that we be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

With all disciples "who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," I have gospel fellowship. To all Christian churches of every denomination, I bear unfeigned affection. For every minister of the New Testament, who glories "only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," and who is not a "lord over God's heritage," I have heart-felt, fraternal regard. To all Christian assemblies and consociations who are united to promote the salvation of mankind, and the reign of Immanuel, I most fervently bid, "God speed !"

But against Church Courts, who claim and exercise legislative and judicial authority, as they are antichristian in their origin, and the contrivance of popish apostates, to obtain and perpetuate unhallowed supremacy over the consciences of men ; and as they have constantly exhibited those lamentable qualities of the human heart which

Jeremiah describes,—being "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked,"—*I sternly and resolutely protest.*

A faithful minister of the New Testament is a totally opposite personage to a haughty Jesuitical Rabbi, and some modern protestant "Ecclesiastical Judicatures" are just as different from a Christian church, as the "Mother of Harlots" is adverse to "the Woman who fled into the wilderness." I "hold to the one and despise the other," for I "cannot serve God and Mammon."

THE CRAFTSMEN.

A SERMON.

BY JAMES GORDON.

"By this craft we have our wealth."
"Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

THE CRAFTSMEN.

I SHALL not, as the usual manner is, accost you with the scraps of a verse, or only with a whole verse, out of the gospel, which method is often made use of purely to avoid telling what goes before or comes after; but shall choose for my text the greatest part of the *nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles*. In discoursing upon this portion of Scripture, so fruitful in good instructions and examples, I shall follow this method.

I. I shall make some general observations upon the behaviour of the Apostle Paul in his ministry.

II. I shall discourse more particularly upon the history.

III. I shall draw some useful and seasonable inferences.

I. I shall make some general observations upon the Apostle Paul, who made the greatest change that ever man did, even from a persecutor to an apostle; two characters as opposite as is that of Lucifer to an angel of light. As soon as light from the Lord fell upon him, he no longer breathed threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, as he had in fore-time, nor put in execution the orders he had about him from the high-priest, or arch-bishop of the Jews, to bring the first Christians and dissenters of those days, bound to Jerusalem. On the contrary, though he was just before a hard-hearted persecutor for the church by law established, on a sudden he became a lover of the saints; and "behold, he prayeth!" *Acts* ix. 11.

Learn hence, that as soon as the fear of the Lord en-

tereth into a man's heart, the sword of persecution droppeth out of his hand. Peace, which is the badge of the gospel, and cruelty, which is the coat of arms of satan, cannot dwell together. "Behold, he prayeth!"

When a zealot leaves his party, and turns Christian, the high party are very apt ungratefully to forget all his former *wicked merit*, which made him dear to them, and to persecute him for apostatizing into mercy and grace. While Paul continued the fiery flail of the godly, the priests held him in high favor, and trusted him with their ecclesiastical commission; and for what? To bring bound to Jerusalem all those of this way. All who forsook the established synagogue and followed Christ.

Conscience and non-conformity had the powers of the world against them seventeen hundred years ago. Paul, the blasphemer, had a post; but Paul the convert, Paul the saint, was allowed no toleration. "They watched the gates day and night to kill him; for, behold, he prayeth!"

The grace of God makes a man both meek under sufferings, and bold for Christ. Here the convert neither returns the injury, nor slacks his pace in planting the gospel; both hard tasks! He risked his life and labored in the vineyard without pay;—a rare thing in our day! when the first motive for overseeing souls, is so much a year. The apostle drove no bargain about preaching, nor made a market of salvation!

Oh! how many dignified drones have we in our time, who set up for a likeness to the apostles, without any likeness; who take great sums for mock apostleship, when nothing thrives by their ministry, but their bellies! This is lamentable, but it is lamentably true.

II. I will discourse particularly upon the history.

"And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God."

He went into the synagogue. Observe, that great bigots as the Jews were, and great a dissenter as Paul was, yet

they suffered him to preach in their synagogues, or churches. He had a clear stage, though perhaps not equal favor. If the same apostle should come among us in London, at this time, he would not be permitted to preach in his own church, unless he first qualified himself according to the forms and ceremonies of the church of England by law established! Nor would he get any preferment that the black dons could hinder him from, in case he persisted to preach what his master preached before him,—that Christ's kingdom was not of this world!

The great point of Paul's preaching,—he disputed and persuaded the things concerning the kingdom of God. Not a word of his own spiritual dominion; not a word of episcopal sovereigns, who were to descend from his loins, and who, without his inspiration or miracles, were to succeed him in what he never had,—worldly wealth, worldly grandeur, and wordly power; things which always mar the kingdom of God, instead of promoting it; there being no fellowship between Christ and Belial.

"But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus."

The priests, who traded in ceremonies, and knew nothing of Jesus Christ, or of holiness, were nettled at a new religion which taught men a plain path to heaven, without the incumbrances of sacrifices, or priests, or fopperies; a religion that had a professed enmity to all secular gain and all holy trifling.

Marvel not at it; a religion without a hierarchy, and godliness without gain, will never please any set of high-priests. Nothing will go down with them but pride and grimace, and the ready penny. Poor Paul had nothing about him of all this, nor did he teach a religion that had. All that he brought was a Christ crucified, and salvation in and through him. They therefore spake evil of that way before the multitude; that is, the priests told the people that Paul was a heretic, and his doctrine was.

schism: but for themselves, they had antiquity and the fathers on their side, with an orthodox church full of decent types and ceremonies.

There needed no more to prevent the apostle from doing any good among them; so he departed. That was all the punishment he inflicted on them. He who had the Holy Ghost, could have inflicted death or misery on them; but it was opposite to the genius of his religion, which allows spiritual pastors to feed their flocks, but not force them, nor to punish them if they refuse to feed. If a man has not a mind to be saved, he has the worst of it himself; and what is it to the priests?

This was the primitive excommunication. If you could work no good upon a man, or if that man worked mischief to you, or gave you scandal, you would not keep company with him. But to give him to the devil, because he was already going to the devil of himself, is to be a minister of Christ the backward way. Besides, there was no need of it. The apostle neither curses these unbelieving high-churchmen, who hardened themselves against him, nor censures them, nor fines them; all which, he who had the power of miracles could have done, had he liked it. He barely departed from them. And if he did not damn them for the sake of their souls, so neither did he surrender them to Beelzebub for the sake of their money. He demanded not a groat of them; so far was he from telling them, "I am your spiritual prince, pray pay me my revenues." Paul was a witness of the resurrection, a disinterested witness, and claimed no dues; though others since do in his name, without being real witnesses of the resurrection, or disinterested witnesses of the resurrection, or disinterested witnesses of any thing else about it. "Disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus." Both schools and synagogues, or churches, were open to him, though he was but a new comer, and a non-conformist. He barely disputed or reasoned. He was a stranger to the doctrine of compulsion. He was an apostle, by virtue of whose words and power, all clerical acts are pretended to be

done ever since: and yet he himself did none, satisfying himself with saving souls, by exhortation and the assistance of the Spirit, which are not *clerical* acts. He was the chief pastor upon earth, and held his commission immediately from God; but he imposed nothing but his advice, reason, and good words upon those that heard him. He could have forced them, had the Spirit so directed, to have swallowed implicitly all that he said; and either destroyed or distressed all who refused. But the Lord Christ, in his dealings with human kind, never uses means that are inhuman.

Here you may distinguish the spirit of Christ from the spirit of high-church. Christ or his apostles never delegated to weak and passionate men, powers and privileges, which, infallible and inspired as they were, they never assumed to themselves. Let us wonder at the impudence of some men in black!

"And this continued for the space of two years." It is not said that he kept a curate all the while.

"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul; so that from his body were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out from them."

Here are certain signs of a power from God; and they who pretend a power from him, without manifesting the same by certain signs, are certainly cheats and impostors. For a power given by the all-wise God, must be given for some certain end, which will infallibly be brought about. It is not consistent with his wisdom and goodness to give it, and yet leave uncertain that he has given it, when a plain manifestation of it is of the utmost importance to the world, and to the purposes for which it is given. If a man bring not infallible proofs of his power, how shall I know that he has it? Demonstration must go before conviction, and conviction before consent. We cannot embrace for truth, what we take to be a lie.

"Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the

name of the Lord Jesus, saying, we adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth."

The apostles had apes in their own time; fellows who set up for their successors, before they themselves were dead. They were exorcists or conjurers, so called, from their pretending to dispossess haunted houses, by the dint of spells and forms of words. They had now got a new form of words, and were going to work with them as fast as they could, boasting, no doubt, great things of their own power. Indeed they took a politic method to resemble the apostle, had they succeeded in it, but they miscarried miserably.

But what shall we say of some moderns, more shameless than these vagabond Jews, who will, right or wrong, be successors to the apostles without doing any thing that is apostolic, but what every reasonable man may do as well. They show no signs but those of gracelessness and pride; and do no wonders, but in the luxury of their lives.

"And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so." More mimickers of miracles! The trade was growing sweet, but the sauce proved sour; for the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?" An angry and contemptuous question, but full of good sense. But the worst follows;—and "the man in whom the evil spirit was, leapt upon them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."

We may easily learn what power men have from God, by their power over the devil. When Paul gave the word of command, the devil did not stand shilly-shally, nor pretend to parley with one who was employed as the Lord's general, against the power of darkness, but was forced to march.

But it is quite otherwise, when interlopers and craftsmen, in hopes to make a penny of satan, pretend to drive him out of his quarters, though they come in the name of the Lord. The devil, in this case, sets up the flag of de-

fiance; "who are ye?" Well spoken, satan! They were vagabonds, Jews, and priests, and the devil chastised them accordingly. "They fled out of that house naked and wounded." The devil got the day, and remained master of the field. He "prevailed against them." They forged a commission, and the Lord Jesus, whose name they abused, would not stand by them.

Learn a lesson from the devil, and take no man's word who pretends to command us in matters of faith and spiritual obedience, though he come in the name of the Lord. Examine him first, and try our own strength upon him. "Who are ye?" A pat question and proper! Let us never lose sight of it, especially when any man would control our belief. Be not determined by outside shape and color. A long gown may cover an exorcist, but let us peep into his inside, search his life and principles; let us try whether he is an apostle in his heart and his actions; and if he be not, let us prevail against him.

Great and solemn rogueries are carried on in the name of Christ and his apostles; even conjurers and formalists reap their harvest with the sickle of the gospel. If such bold cheats could be practised under this great apostle's nose; what may not be done now he is so far off? How many exorcists, how many sons of Sceva, have we at this time among us, and in this enlightened protestant country! Great numbers, yea, great societies. Every man, who in the name of Christ or Paul, claims to himself gain or dominion, is a son of Sceva, and can be no guard against the devil, who despises him. Judge ye now what swarms we have!

The true reason of the great wickedness which is in the world,—we maintain an army against the devil, of whom he standeth not in awe. In the first ages he was driven out of every corner, and now he possesses every corner; why? they had apostles, and we have the sons of Sceva.

"And many that believed came and confessed, and showed their deeds;" that is, many who had been deluded and misled by those deceivers, were now undeceived.

"And many also of them which used curious arts, brought their books together and burnt them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver."

How fertile must the world then have been in mysterious and conjuring books! What systems of nonsense and knavery must have been there! What glosses, commentaries, and riddles! For those were not books of useful knowledge and learning, or books that taught virtue and morality, since such the apostle would have preserved; but they were juggling and conjuring books, such as contained heathen traditions, with false miracles, and false doctrines, and were probably full of metaphysical distinctions, and the controversial divinity of those days; such as bundles of foolish sermons, pagan systems, articles of their faith, formularies, lying mysteries, cabalistical nonsense, and the high-church pamphlets of that age; all opposite to the divine truths uttered by Paul.

"So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed." *The ready way to make the word of God grow and prevail, was to burn all the priest's books!* Oh, that our eyes were also opened! what fuel should we have for bonfires!

"The same time there arose no small stir about that way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silver-smith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen, whom he called together, with the workmen of like occupation; and said, sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth: moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying, that they be no gods which are made with hands; so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also, that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth."

A notable speech and confession! He kept a shop for

the deity, and got a world of money by the trade; and rather than lose it, he will oppose Christianity, and maintain his craft against Jesus Christ.

This mechanical priest and his brethren, retainers to Diana, had lost many customers by Paul's preaching. Their holy gear began to lie upon their hands; folk's eyes were opened and the cheat disclosed. Upon which *Doctor* Demetrius and the whole convocation of priests and craftsmen accused the apostle as an enemy to the church, and an underminer of its rights and interests. "Sirs," says Mr. Prolocutor, "ye know that by this craft we have our wealth." Now, if this Paul goes on to persuade people, as he does, that all our gain is built on deceit, and that our trade is of human institution, our function will fall into contempt, and we into beggary.

All that was artfully addressed to the interest and avarice of his brother craftsmen, who, sharing the benefit, and living plentifully upon the ecclesiastical revenues of the established church of Diana, had motives sufficient to engage them in the defence of the said cheat.

Now he has a knack for catching the bigots, by telling them, what danger there was of the church; and lest the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshipped. What pity it was that so *pure and primitive* a church, and the most orthodox and best constituted church in all Asia, should be in such piteous danger!

What false knaves and godless infidels that priestly crew were! If they believed that their mistress the goddess, who had indeed the best accustomed church in all Asia, was as great as they pretended her to be, why did they mistrust her power to protect her own grandeur and defend herself? Especially against a single man, whom they represented as an enemy to the gods and their church, and who was consequently the more easy to be defeated or destroyed? But if they knew her unable to defend her

divinity, and support her priests and tradesmen, then were they in reality cheats and unbelievers.

The wide difference there is between these high-priests' church, and the Bible church! The priests' church being a trading church, and money being her end, and grimace her ware, which were the source of their authority and reverence; whatever enlightened the people, marred the market of the priests. By this craft we have our wealth: "While we can by bawling and lying put off our trumpery for religion, it will always sell well; otherwise, it will not be worth a groat; let us contend for our trumpery, and cry, the church!" Accordingly, the auditory actually practised the advice given them by that high-church preacher, roaring for Diana of Ephesus, "By this craft we have our wealth."

That was the spirit of the priests' church, so opposite to that of the Bible church; which being founded upon a rock, fears neither rain, nor storms, nor dissenters, nor false brethren. She is founded upon a rock, which rock is Christ; and whoever trusts in him and believes the Scripture, cannot think his church in danger. Indeed, if his church is founded upon hoods and caps, and cringes and forms, and filthy lucre, he may well dread the judgment of God, and the reason of man; for they are both against him and his dowdy, and his church will totter as soon as ever common sense takes it by the collar. By fearing for the superstructure, he owns the foundation to be sandy. "By this craft we have our wealth."

Those craftsmen keep a rout about the danger of their church. It ought to be in danger, like a sorry bundle of inventions and gimcracks as it was. But for the pure, the primitive church of Christ, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The craftsmen shall not prevail against it, who are the sorest enemies which it ever had—it is founded upon a rock. Paul does not once complain in all the New Testament, that his church was in danger, nor does any other of the apostles or evangelists. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of the Lord

abideth for ever. What say our craftsmen to this? Either they know it not, or believe it not. Paul, whenever he mentions dangers or perils, in his epistles, means perils to his own person: nor did he by his own person, ever in all his life, mean the church. But Paul had the Spirit of God; he was no craftsman.

Christians trust to the veracity of God, that he will for ever defend the holy revelation that he has given to us. Let us on our part, treat it as becomes its dignity, and omnipotent author. Let us not turn our religion into a play, nor dishonor it with baubles, as the manner of the popish craftsmen is, who convert their churches into puppet-shows and music-meetings; and then, when they are laughed at, cry they are in danger. Pretty fellows! to raise our mirth, whether we will or no, and then make us choke ourselves to keep it in. Their craft is in danger to be set at nought. They know its value, and quake lest other people should know it too. Oh the impudence of craftsmen! how boldly they mock God, and in his name pick pockets!

The Christian religion, which prevailed against all the powers of the world, cannot be in danger from all the powers of the world: and every church may be in danger but a Christian church. Let us praise the Lord that our church is safe.

"When they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, great is Diana of the Ephesians."

The violent effects of a hot sermon, however absurd and villanous. Here is Dr. Demetrius, whose craft was all his religion, lugs heaven into a dispute about his trade, and tacks the salvation of his hearers to the gain which he made of his shrines; yet this awakened no indignation in the seduced and ill-judging auditory; but straight they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, "great is Diana of the Ephesians: the church! the church!"

Ignorance is the mother of zeal.—"They were full of wrath." For what? for Diana of Ephesus.—A god cre-

ated by a stone-cutter; an insensible piece of a rock, guarded by a band of priests; who picked a fine livelihood out of it. But Paul had opened some men's eyes, and the loaves began to come in but slowly. This enraged the craftsmen, and they enraged the people. The priests lost customers, and the people lost their senses. Such is the power of delusion over dark and slavish minds! Let but the priest point at a windmill, and cry the church is falling, his congregation will venture their brains to stop the sails. What a rare army does zeal raise, when religion and reason do not spoil the muster, or stop their march!

"The whole city was filled with confusion; and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre."

"The whole city was filled with confusion." Who doubts it, when church was the cry, and the priests had begun it? Give them but their way, and allow them but to assert their own claims, they will quickly turn all things, human and divine, topsy-turvey. Here is a whole city thrown into confusion, purely because a branch of the priestly trade, infamous, forged, and irreligious, was like to fall before the word of God preached by Paul.

This shows that there is nothing so lying and so vile, that they will not justify. They knew that their church was a creature of their own composing; that the worship performed in it was burlesque-worship, contrived by themselves and paid to a senseless image; and they knew that the whole was an impudent delusion, framed by human invention. Yet they raise heaven and earth in defence of their forgeries and superstitions. Not a tittle will they part with, not a shrine, not a ceremony. No, rather than this, they publish lies, they deceive the people, they decry sober piety, they raise a sedition, and confound all things. "By this craft we have our wealth."

The different behaviour of truth and falsehood! or, of Paul and the craftsmen! When men contend for truth,

they do it calmly, because they are sure that it will support itself. But error, conscious of its weak foundation, flies instantly for support to rage and oppression. Paul reasons peaceably and powerfully; Demetrius deceives, scolds, and raises a mob. I defy the craftsmen to show me one mob of Paul's raising in all the New Testament.

The apostle wanted no mob; he neither blended politics nor gain with his doctrine; he had no factious designs; he meddled not with human affairs; he taught peace, and he practised it; he had no grimace to support; no mock-reverence to acquire or defend; he abhorred pious fraud, and exposed it: he showed the people the manifest truths of the gospel, and of reason, and that presently opened their eyes to see the impious delusions and bold impositions of the reigning priests; and hence began the rage of Dr. Demetrius and his mob.

One man, with truth on his side, is enough to frighten a whole army, yea, a whole hierarchy of craftsmen, and to defeat them, if he has but a fair hearing. You see also the graceless methods that red-hot high-priests take, to confute such a man. They dress him up as an atheist and an enemy to the church, and then set the mob upon him; for the law was not against Paul, as we shall see presently, and yet they meant to destroy Paul against law. An implacable tribe! No power can satisfy them, that has either mercy in it, or bounds to it: craft is their calling, and lies and violence the tools of their trade.

Oh, what wolves are men, yea, what wolves are priests, when they have hardened themselves against the grace of God! Without meekness and peace there can be no such thing as the fear of the Lord; witness Dr. Demetrius, and those that are like him. Let us pray for their amendment, that it would please the Lord to take away their reprobate mind!

"And having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre."

Gaius and Aristarchus, dissenters, and non-conformist

preachers! Men of Macedonia; foreigners, too, ever the aversion of high-church! Paul's companions in travel. How! bare companions? Methinks, that is something familiar, unless they were lords archbishops of some country where they did not reside. But Paul had no spiritual pride, nor received his fellow Christians upon the knee, as some who pretend to be his successors at Rome and elsewhere, do in our days.

"They rushed with one accord into the theatre." They had got their prey, a brace of non-cons, and carried them into the play-house to bait them. What hooping and hallooing about the two godly Christians! How many fanatics they were called, and disturbers of the peace of Diana's high-church? Doubtless they were charged with writing books and papers against Diana's clergy, and the established gew-gaws; and perhaps, Paul was suspected for having a hand in them, and some of his epistles were produced to make good the charge. Well! here they are, *the priests their accusers, the mob their judges, and truth their crime!* Men and wickedness are still the same; we have seen the like in our times.

"And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not." There is, on one hand, the boldness of a man, who has God for his guide; and on the other, the prudence of men, who knew the mercy of priests and mobs. "And therefore certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre."

"Some therefore cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together."

"Some cried one thing and some another." The true genius of a rabble, led by their priests and their passions, against peace and against religion! They are united in their zeal to do mischief, but they differ how they shall go about it. They are for Diana's church, and show it by rage and noise; but they are under no rules, except

the general one taught them by the craftsmen, to be fierce for the church, against the apostle; for the rest, every man is his own master, and every man will be heard first.

A rare picture of our present mobs, headed by one of themselves in a gown; I mean our modern Demetrius. I think the man is no great craftsman; but he has got Diana in his head, and he himself is in the head of the rabble. But as to the point of understanding, we may throw him and his rabble together into one short prayer, and cry with our blessed Lord, when the Jewish priests were putting him to death, for bearing witness against their carnal inventions, their hypocrisy and their cruelty; "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

"The assembly was confused." There was no order, no reason, no moderation among them. The very type of our high-church mob again! "And the more part knew not wherefore they were come together." Though they came determined to do mischief, yet they were at a loss what species of it to go about, till their general, the priest, gave them the word. Let us lament the horrible state of those poor unregenerate souls, whose pastors feed them with poison instead of the food of life, and teach them rage instead of religion. Take warning; beware of Diana and her craftsmen, and cleave to your Bibles as you love your souls!

"And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews, the believing Jews, putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with his hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. But when they knew that he was a Jew, that is a believing Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours, cried out, great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

Was there ever such a couple of twin cases as theirs and ours! Verily, our high-church bigots are the undoubted descendants of Diana's varlets at Ephesus seventeen hundred years ago. Nor is the breed one whit mended; they are still the tools of the craftsmen, blind, outrageous, and loud.

Like good Alexander, we would make our defence unto the people; but they will not hear us. Mark the different manner of our disputing from theirs, and the contrary arguments we use! we appeal to the Bible; they cry, the church! and answer the word of the Lord with a brickbat!

"Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" high-church forever! That was the cry for the space of two hours. Poor souls! it was all that they could say, and all that their priests had taught them to say, "great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Was ever church more pithily defended! Certainly the craftsmen of our days have learned their logic from their Ephesian predecessors. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" *I have heard a sermon a full hour long upon the same subject, and yet not more said, nor better.*

You have already heard two speeches, one from the craftsmen, and the other from the mob. Dr. Demetrius being in the chair, tells his brethren of the trade, that *by this craft they had their wealth!* That is the first part of his sermon. He puts the best leg foremost, and uses his strongest argument first. He fairly puts the stress of his faith upon the ready rhino, and in the very dawn of his discourse, shows himself to be orthodox. The whole convocation was convinced. He has, however, a rare gudgeon behind for the mob;—*a charge of heresy against Paul!* The apostle had the assurance to publish, that they be no gods which are made with hands: terrible atheism against the established divinity! and you see what a bitter spirit it raised.

That was the priest's speech or sermon. Now hear the mob's speech once more, for it is a rarity. They cried out till their throats were jaded, "great is Diana of the Ephesians!" and lugged a couple of dissenting ministers into the bear garden, at the mercy of high-churchmen.

Now you shall hear a third speech, which by its honesty, moderation, and good sense, will refresh you after all the

knavery and impudence in the craftsmen, and all the sottishness and fury in the people.

"And when the town clerk had appeased the people, he said, ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and do nothing rashly: For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore, if Demetrius and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies; let them implead one another."

This is the speech of a layman! Think ye not that he was a low-churchman?

"Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against." Right, Mr. Town Clerk! their dowdy image was established by law; and if it had been a broomstick, it would have had the priests on its side, and must have been worshipped: where the carcass is, there will the ravens be gathered together.

"Ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly." So they would, if the priests had let them alone. But the craftsmen had goaded their sides with the cry of the church, till the poor reprobates were mad.

"What man is there that knoweth not." Every body knew that Madam Diana's palace at Ephesus had more superstition and Peter-pence paid to it, and consequently, had a greater swarm of chaplains, than all the divinity shops in Asia besides. She had men and money on her side. Could not all this secure her? No; her bully boys were afraid of Jesus Christ, and two or three dissenting teachers, his servants.

"And the image which fell down from Jupiter." Fell down from Jupiter! what great liars some priests are! They will needs fetch all their fables and filthy ware out of heaven itself; and yet who has less interest there?

Their very ballads and raree-shows are fathered upon divine right. Oh, the brazen front of some men! The town clerk here conforms himself to their manner of speaking: but the man knew better.

"The image which fell down from Jupiter." All the priests' lumber, they say, comes from God; and yet they are scared out of their wits, lest man should take it from them: as if God could not defend his own gifts and institutions. This preposterous conduct bewrays them. Either they believe not in God, or know that they belie him:—both cases are very common. Whosoever feareth the Lord, need not fear what man can do unto him.

"For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess." Well urged. "If the men are innocent, why do ye abuse them? If they preach false doctrine, why do ye not confute them? If they come not to your established church, why do ye not convince them that they ought to come? Or, because ye cannot answer them, do ye therefore mob them? It is plain, that the honest men have neither stolen any of your madam's consecrated trinkets, nor called her a prostitute impostor."

"Wherefore, if Demetrius and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies, let them implead one another."

Better still! This is reasoning now; a practice which the craftsmen do not care for; the arm of flesh is their best argument, and at that too they are generally laid in the dirt. "Gentlemen," says the town clerk, "it is evident that ye distrust your cause, by not trusting the merits of it to the law. All external advantages are for you; ye are in your own town; ye have most friends and most money; and ye have most assurance, else I should never have found you here bawling for your church and breaking the law, and, to your eternal scandal, besetting with your numbers a few harmless men, whose only arms lie in the innocence of their lives, and in the force of what they say. If you are vanquished at these weapons, have

the honesty to own it, or for shame be silent. If these men speak against the law, why punish ye them not by the law? But if ye have no law against them, neither have they any transgression."

What answer did the craftsmen, or their calves, the multitude, make to this? Such an answer, I guess, as they are wont to make to us every day: I suppose they cursed him for a heretic, and so got drunk, and went home.

Oh, the deplorable condition of men that are out of Christ! And such are they who take their religion from the craftsmen. The worshippers of Diana would have been as outrageous for one of her beagles, had the craftsmen told them that the beagle came down from Jupiter. Let us cleave to our Bibles!

III. The great inference I shall make is this,—that craftsmen or high-churchmen are at odds with conscience and truth, and afraid of them. To do them justice, though in relation to God and religion, there is no believing what they say; yet whenever they reason from their own interests, they reason well. By this craft we have our wealth.—As to their flourish about Diana and her high-church, it has not, in point of argument, common sense in it. All they assert is, that all Asia worshipped her; as if, because Diana was then uppermost, therefore Jesus Christ ought to have been kept undermost. They could not stand Paul's logic: he appealed to facts, he appealed to reason, he appealed to conscience.

They, therefore, that is, Diana's high-priests, or the overseers of her fopperies, and fingerers of her gain, form a design to oppress a man whom they could not answer. There was no bearing it, that men should be conducted in their religion by inward conviction and the grace of God, and not by them, who had no advantage from either, for the support of their impositions.

Beside, if all external trumpery and grimace in religion, were certainly ridiculous and vain, as the Christian religion certainly teaches: if postures, cringes, shrines, music, and

the like bodily devotion, were so far from signifying any thing, that they were a certain and pernicious contradiction to the simple institution of Jesus, whose will was fulfilled by believing in him, and living well; then were the craftsmen like to be but little reverenced, and to have but little custom for their shrines and their small wares. A priest dressed up in an antic coat, and making mouths before a dead image, would make a merry figure before the people, instead of an awful one, as formerly; and in the midst of all their holy hubbub and solemnity, a Christian need but ask them one short question, who required these things at your hand? and they were confounded.

What do they do, therefore, in this case? Do they defend their church gear by reason, or by reason confute Paul? No. Paul asserted, that they be no gods which are made with hands; the most self-evident truth that ever was asserted by any man. They cannot answer it; nor yet will they own themselves in the wrong; but they will punish the apostle for being in the right. In order to do this, do they go to law with him? Paul and his companions had offended no law: they were peaceable men; they were loyal subjects, and good livers; they were contenders for virtue and piety; and they had not uttered a syllable against Diana's idol, but what resulted from the eternal truths which they delivered.

What course then do the craftsmen take with them? A very extraordinary one in itself, but very common with them; even the course of unprecedented power and oppression. They were chargeable with no legal crime; all their offence was, that they enraged the craftsmen, by opening the gospel daylight upon the dark minds of the misled multitude. They therefore show their rage, and have the innocent men seized and deprived of their liberty, without the shadow of any legal process against them. Nay, it does not appear that they had yet found a name for the crime that they alleged, but the men were confined at random, and probably put to great charges.

This shows their spirit; and that priestly rage will be

gratified over the belly of truth, of innocence, of humanity, of law, and of religion itself. It cannot brook the least good office done to human-kind; all its absurdities are sacred; and yet nothing is sacred enough to mollify or restrain it, ever unforgiving, ever gnashing its teeth. Truth will perpetually be its foe, and therefore it will perpetually be in a flame.

This shows, too, the amiableness of an opposite spirit; I mean, the amiable spirit of the gospel. Where did our blessed Saviour, who held all power in heaven and earth, and could command legions of angels—where, or when did he, in the midst of dangers, opposition, and abuses, ever oppress or punish even his unbelieving and implacable enemies? Where did ever Paul, who had the power and assistance of the Holy Ghost, and who had the power and assistance of miracles—where and when did ever he show any resentment to his bitterest foes among the Jews, or his most idolatrous gainsayers among the Gentiles?

What account is to be given for this diametrical opposition between these two spirits? I mean the spirit of the gospel, and the spirit of high-priests? None but this, that Christ and his apostles sought no empire but over wickedness and error, by the sole means of grace, gentleness, and persuasion; and they who have no opposite ends to serve, must bring them about by delusion, violence, and force. This is a certain criterion to mark out truth and falsehood, and true and false teachers. I defy all the priests upon earth to show, that the religion of Jesus, wants for its stay or its advancement, the external influence of worldly power. It was always purest, and flourished most, when all human power was against it. Slaves and hypocrites may be made by it; but religion rejoices in liberty and sincerity.

When men are angry in defence of their opinions, and oppress for their sake, let them not belie Christ, and say, it is for him: but let their passions be made to answer for what nothing but their passions can produce. Why must ambition, avarice, and revenge, be fathered upon religion,

which abhors them all? Why must bitterness and cruelty be laid at the door of the Father of mercies?

We cannot bear such violence offered to our reason and our language, as any longer to hear things called by wrong and unnatural names; or to see barbarous and impious actions varnished over with holy colors and godly pretences. It is an affront to our religion. We cannot find Christ in the actions of Belial; nor can we see the holy man in the oppressor. They that would resemble Jesus Christ, must do as he did, and not do what he never did; and they who will in any case follow the measures taken by the idolaters of Diana, in the case of Paul, must forego their title to Christianity, and argue as these idolaters did, "by this craft we have our wealth." And then the religion of the New Testament will not be profaned in their quarrel.

But why seize Paul, or any body that belonged to him? Is one man such a terror to many, that he must be punished before it appears that he deserved any punishment at all, and before he is heard? or is it dangerous to hear him? Are they afraid of his defence in a legal trial, as much as of his preaching and of his reasoning?

Downright oppression, that is, power without law, was the whole scope of their proceedings, and revenge their only motive. Paul was not running away. His whole business was to publish truth. He was at Ephesus on purpose. He did it every day; he preached in public; he taught in their synagogues, and disputed in their schools, so publicly and so effectually, that the arch-craftsman charged him with having persuaded and turned away much people. That griped; his reasoning prevailed, and the craft was in danger.

Mark the very different situation of Paul and his adversaries. They were in possession of an established church, and of all its revenues, and of the superstition of the people, who run mad for the church at the pleasure of the priest. The law was partial to them, being made by men of their own religion; and the judges and magistrates were all of the

same. The people were of opinion that their church was of divine institution, and that Heaven was on their side. The philosophers, and all they who governed their schools, and had the education of youth, were of that church, being every one heathens, except perhaps a few who judged for themselves, and could distinguish natural religion instituted by God, from the absurd medley of rituals invented by the priests. The Christian religion was as yet but in its infancy. The craftsmen governed all things; earth was in their possession, and Heaven they pretended was their champion.

Here are securities and advantages enough to put truth out of countenance, had truth been amongst them. In reality, she wants not so many. But falsehood can never have enough. The craftsmen knew this, and showed that they did so by their outrageous behaviour.

View Paul, and see what terrible arms he bears, that are so frightful to the craftsmen. He was a stranger; he was a dissenter; he had no equipage to dazzle people's eyes; no pompous garments to win their reverence, nor wealth to bribe their affections; and he sought no popularity, by indulging men in their vices, or encouraging them in their errors. All the numerous advantages of his adversaries, the priests, were so many obstacles and disadvantages to him, the apostle. He had only truth on his side; which rendered him an over-match for all the priests in the world. All the privilege, all the advantage which he desired, was a fair hearing. This, it seems, he had obtained of the town; and it had its effect. That was his crime, and there began the priestly fury, the fiercest, the most brutish of all others.

Shameless men! was it not enough that reason and religion were both against you; and that you would neither be proselytes to them yourselves, nor suffer that others should? Must you likewise proclaim their invincible power, and your own imbecility and nakedness, by virulently using direct, undisguised force, to stop their mouths? What impudence! What folly!

You that boasted your conformity to the law, and your establishment by the law! you that were the possessors of all scholarship! that were proprietors of the arts and sciences, and of the great endowments given for their support! you that instructed the young and old, and controlled the consciences of both! you that shut and opened heaven and hell! you that were the privy-counsellors of Diana! What could undermine you; what could annoy you? If you are not hurt yourselves, why do you oppress others? By this method you show your cloven feet. "Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are ye?"

CONTENTS.

Associate Presbyterians, ... 81
Andrew Stark, ... 82
Associate Reformed Presbyterians, ... 88
Baptists, ... 54
Christian Church, ... 20
Common Fame, ... 109
Congregationalists, ... 51
Episcopalians, ... 49
Fables and Endless Genealogies, ... 41
In nomine Domini, ... 36
Instal, ... 44
Introductory, ... 15
Jesuits, ... 48
Lawyers in Church Courts, ... 101
Letter to Nathanael Christian, ... 5
License, ... 42
Methodists, ... 56
Doctrine and Discipline, ... 60
Inquisitorial Test, ... 58
Prelatical power, ... 58
Mischiefs of Church Courts, ... 99
Notice, ... 11
Operations of Church Courts, ... 46

Ordain, ... 43
Origin of Church Courts, ... 25
Origin of Councils, ... 23
Postscript, ... 120
Presbyterians, ... 64
Doctrine and Discipline, ... 71
Committee of Bills and Overtures, . . 64
Slavery, ... 68
Third Church in Philadelphia, . . . 66
William M'Calla, ... 67
Progress of Church Courts, ... , 25
Ralph Hare, ... 108
Reformed Dutch General Synod, . . . 90
Decisions of Church Courts, . . . 92
Romish exorcism, ... 90
Reformed Presbyterians, ... 80
Sermon,—The Craftsmen, ... 129
Whip with six strings, ... 77